

FDA orders starker warnings on opioid painkillers

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The Food and Drug Administration is requiring stronger warning labels on prescription painkillers like OxyContin, in the government's latest attempt to reduce overdose deaths caused by the long-acting medications.

The changes announced Tuesday are designed to remind doctors and patients about the fatal risks of misusing and abusing opioid pain relievers, which include extended-release forms of oxycodone, hydrocodone and morphine.

The new label emphasizes that long-acting opioids are only for patients with "around-the-clock" pain that cannot be treated with over-the-counter medications or immediate-release opioids.

The FDA has issued a number of warnings about the dangers of [prescription pain relievers](#) in recent years but with little effect. Inappropriate use of opioids caused more than 16,650 [overdose deaths](#) in 2010, up more than 12 percent from 2008.

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