

# If prescribed opioids for pain, ask lots of questions: FDA

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(HealthDay)—If your doctor prescribes opioid painkillers such as

hydrocodone, oxycodone, codeine or morphine for you, there are a number of questions you should ask, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration advises.

Opioids can be used to treat certain kinds of acute and [chronic pain](#), but can have some serious side effects, most notably addiction.

If you're prescribed opioids, the FDA says you should ask: Why do I need this medication? Is it right for me? Are there nonopioid pain medicines I could take instead?

If your doctor thinks a prescription opioid is the best way to manage your pain, ask: to be prescribed the lowest dose and the smallest quantity you'll need; how to reduce the risk of potential side effects; when and how to stop or taper its use; and when to follow up on how well it's working.

Take opioids exactly as prescribed by your [health care provider](#). If you still have pain, call your health care provider. Don't take an extra dose of opioids.

Learn to identify [serious side effects](#)—such as excessive sleepiness or craving more of the medication—so you and your family will know when to call a doctor or go to the hospital.

Ask your pharmacist if your [opioid prescription](#) comes with a Medication Guide (paper handouts that come with many prescription medicines) that can provide you with more information.

Tell your health care provider if you've had problems with substance misuse or addiction to drugs or alcohol, or a history of smoking cigarettes, or if anyone in your family has had problems with substance misuse, alcoholism or drug addiction.

You also need to inform your health care provider about all other medicines you're taking, especially those prescribed to treat anxiety, sleeping problems or seizures. Even medicines you take only occasionally could interact with the opioid medication.

If you have youngsters at home, the FDA recommends storing your opioid medications in a lockbox. An accidental dose of an opioid meant for an adult can cause a fatal overdose in a child. The lockbox will also prevent anyone from stealing your opioid medications.

**More information:** The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more about [prescription opioids](#).

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