

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT USING OPIOIDS FOR BACK PAIN OR OSTEOARTHRITIS

What should I do about my pain?

Medicines are just a small part of the management of back pain and osteoarthritis. Other options such as exercise, physiotherapy and maintaining a healthy weight help manage the pain. Some medicines like opioids may have a limited role in management of back pain and osteoarthritis but you need to be aware of the risks. Your health professional can discuss the options with you.

You have been prescribed an opioid, a type of pain medicine (eg, oxycodone, tramadol, codeine). These medicines may provide a small benefit for some people but have significant side effects and can be addictive. To find out more about the specific opioid medicine you have been prescribed, ask for a Consumer Medicines Information leaflet from your doctor or pharmacist.

It's important to only use opioids for the shortest time and at the lowest dose possible.



Things to consider

Ask your health professional these **5 questions** and any others you may have.

- What might be causing the pain?

 The cause of the pain and how long it is expected to last depends on your situation. In some cases, there may not be a known cause for the pain.
- What are the risks and benefits of this medicine?

 Opioids may reduce pain they won't take the pain away completely. Any benefit needs to be weighed against potential harms. Opioids have major side effects, including the possibility of dependence and overdose. The risk of any of these occurring increases if you take the medicine often or use a large amount.
- How long should I take this medicine?

 Opioids should only be used for the shortest time and at the lowest dose possible. It is possible this medicine may not work effectively to control the pain. If this is the case, discuss with your doctor or pharmacist when you can lower your dose or stop the medicine altogether.
- Is there anything else I can do to help the pain?

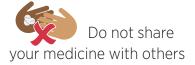
 Yes. There are lots of effective and safer ways to manage pain, building activity slowly, applying heat or cold, exercise and avoiding bed rest. Most people need to use a combination of strategies.
- What is my pain management plan?
 Work with your health professional to develop a plan that works for you. You can use the pain management plan template over the page.



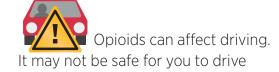


At home

Use these top tips to keep you and others around you safe while you are taking opioids.









Let your doctor know if you

are taking other medicines that also make you feel sleepy





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My goal	

There are many ways you can manage back pain and/or osteoarthritis. Work with your health professional to create your personal pain management plan. Some strategies they may suggest are listed below.

Physical (body)		Psychological (mind)	Social (lifestyle)		
Land or water-based exerciseHeat, coolingSpinal manipulationMassage	Yoga/TaiChi/Pilates Acupuncture Walking stick/cane Knee brace	Cognitive behavioural therapyMindfulness	Maintain a healthy weightStay physically activeKeep working		
Pain medicines					
Paracetamol					
Anti-inflammatory medicine					
Opioid					
Other					
Other notes					



Ask your health professional

When should I seek urgent medical attention?

When should I next see my doctor?

I have ongoing pain which has lasted for more than 3 months. What should I do?

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