What I should know about opioid pain medicine

What is an opioid?
Opioids are strong pain medicines that are used to treat moderate to severe pain when other pain medications have not worked.

Common pain medications
- Asprin
- Tylenol
- Ibuprofen
- Aleve
- Gabapentin
- Lyrica
- Lidocaine

Slower & NOT habit forming

Opioid medications
- Phenergan with codeine cough medicines
- Norco hydrocodone with acetaminophen
- Percocet oxycodone with acetaminophen
- Tylenol #3 acetaminophen with codeine
- MS Contin morphine
- Oxycontin oxycodone
- Ultram tramadol
- Pain patches fentanyl
- Dilaudid hydromorphone

Powerful & habit forming

*Opioids are also referred to as “opiates” or “narcotics.”

Signs of an overdose
Seek immediate medical attention if you experience:
- Severe dizziness
- Inability to stay awake
- Hallucinations
- Heavy or unusual snoring
- Slow breathing

Do not use while taking opioids
**Unless specifically advised by your doctor

Call 911
- Slow or no heartbeat
- Aren’t breathing
- Cannot be woken up
- Lips or fingernails are blue
- Can’t speak clearly
- While asleep making gasping, gurgling, or snorting sounds
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Common Side Effects

- Dizziness, drowsiness
- Low blood pressure upon standing
- Dry mouth
- Itching & sweating
- Low sex hormones, low energy
- Constipation, nausea, vomiting

Factors that Increase Risks of Dangerous Side Effects

- Are age 65 or older
- Sleep apnea, COPD, asthma, kidney or liver problems
- First time opioid users
- High dose of opioids
- Currently taking medications for anxiety or sleep
- Have a history of problems with alcohol or other substances

Important Things to Know

- Use opioid medicines **AS NEEDED AND DIRECTED** only
- If taken for more than 2 weeks, speak with your doctor for a plan to stop
- NEVER take more than prescribed
- **DO NOT DRIVE** until you know how the medication affects you
- NEVER take someone else’s medicine
- NEVER sell or share your medicine

Talk to your provider about any concerns or questions you have about how to take your medication.

Anti-Overdose Medication

- If you are taking opioid medicines, ask your doctor about Naloxone, a medicine that can temporarily reverse overdose and prevent death.
- If you are unsure if an opioid is causing symptoms, still give Naloxone as it is not known to cause any harm in non-opioid overdose.
- Immediate medical attention is required even if Naloxone is administered.

If you or someone you know are struggling with addiction, tell your doctor or call the National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357.

**POTENTIAL RISKS**

**Tolerance:** need a higher dose to get the same pain relief effect

**Dependence:** withdrawal symptoms if stopped abruptly

**Withdrawal symptoms:** pain, aches, sweating, nausea, vomiting, trouble sleeping

**Addiction:** dependence with abusive pleasure seeking behavior

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