



Reach for **safer medicine**

Every day we make decisions that have a direct impact on our health. Making smart food choices and exercising regularly can help keep us in shape and avoid many injuries. However, if an injury does occur, we can still protect our health when deciding what medications to take.

Prescription painkillers such as Oxycontin, Percocet and Vicodin account for more drug overdoses than heroin and cocaine combined. These legally obtainable drugs are highly addictive and actually less effective than a combination of ibuprofen and acetaminophen.

What Are the Signs of Opioid Painkiller Addiction?

It's not always easy to tell if someone is addicted to opioid painkillers. Experts say common symptoms include:

- Excessive mood swings or anxiety
- Sleepiness
- Slurred speech
- Confusion or poor decision making
- Small pupils or shallow breathing
- Continually "losing" prescriptions so more must be written
- Seeking prescriptions from more than one doctor
- Stealing, forging or selling prescriptions

Should You Work or Drive While Taking Opioid Painkillers?

Certain side effects of opioid painkillers could hinder your ability to drive or work safely. These side effects include:

- Dizziness
- Sleepiness
- Blurred vision
- Confusion or unusual thoughts
- Delayed reaction
- Difficulty following directions

Talk to Your Family About the Risks of Opioid Painkillers

- Discuss the dangers of mixing prescription drugs with alcohol
- Explain how painkillers are made from opioids, which are similar to heroin
- Talk to grandparents and caregivers about how to safely store their medications
- Secure any opioid painkillers, sedatives, sleep medications or stimulants in a locked drawer or container

Keep Young Children Safe Around Medications

- All medicines and vitamins should always be kept up and away and out of a child's reach
- Practice safe medicine storage and remind houseguests to keep purses, bags or coats up and away when in your home

FAST STAT:

Every day, 52 people die from prescription opioid overdoses.

Source: NSC analysis of NCHS mortality data



GREEN CROSS TIP:

Make sure to tell your doctor if you have certain health conditions, including:

- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Sleep apnea
- Depression or anxiety
- Personal or family history of addiction or substance abuse

