

What if your prescriber doesn't follow CDC guidelines?

- Your health plan benefits department can provide a treatment template that you and your doctor will use to set goals to manage your pain.
- Ask your doctor about using therapeutic drug screens to ensure you are taking the right amount of medication. Drug screens help providers customize opiate therapy to patient needs.
- If you have been taking opiate medication for more than 90 days with no pain improvement, talk to your doctor about seeing a pain management specialist. Such specialists are experts at evaluating and treating pain.



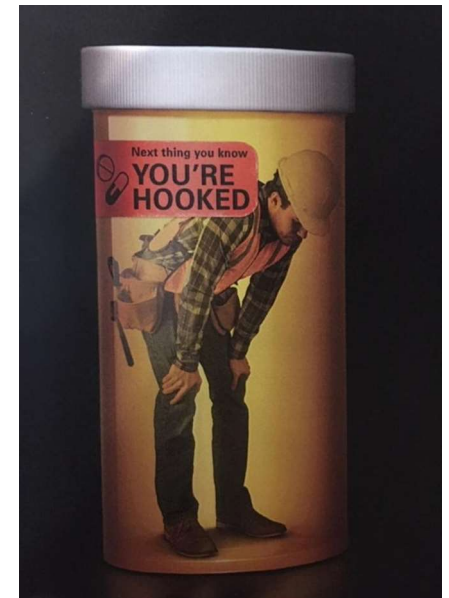
How we become addicted

1. Our bodies produce endorphins to reduce our perception of pain and increase our sense of well-being.
2. The opioid molecule acts like an endorphin molecule. Our bodies allow opioids to bind to endorphin receptors. When opioids bind to these receptors, the perception of pain is reduced and well-being is increased.
3. Our bodies then stop producing endorphins – as they are no longer needed to control pain.
4. If we stop taking the opioid, we now have neither endorphin nor a drug, so we experience a rise in pain and a decrease of well-being. This causes a person to have withdrawal symptoms, including nausea, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, convulsions and even death. *This is called physical dependence, and it is a naturally occurring response* that is outside of our control. Physical dependence can occur in as little as 72 hours after starting opioid medications.

- *Research shows that up to 75% of people keep taking opioids to avoid the painful withdrawal symptoms - NOT to control pain*

CHRONIC PAIN AND OPIOID PRESCRIPTIONS:

PROTECTING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



Opioids defined

Opioids are prescription drugs such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, morphine and fentanyl, but they also include illicit drugs such as heroin. Opioids are also called narcotics. The opiate drug is derived from the opium poppy.

Why take opioids?

The goal of prescription opioids is to relieve pain. Opioids are safe and effective when taken for a short period of time *AND* when used as directed by your physician.

Surprising statistics

Each day...

More than 115 Americans will die after overdosing on opioids

1,150 people go to treatment for opioid abuse

3,680 people will go to the emergency room for misuse of their opioid prescription

14,950 people will misuse or become dependent on opioids

94,875 people will use an opioid medication without a prescription

4% of employees will misuse prescription opioid medications

CDC GUIDELINES FOR OPIATE PRESCRIBING

In response to the opioid epidemic and to promote wellness for our plan members, we have adopted Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines when opioids are prescribed for employees and insured family members.

As part of this program, we will work with our providers and prescribers to ensure that CDC guidelines are followed when providing care to you and your family, including:

1. A Treatment Agreement to establish goals for the management of pain *AND*, when appropriate, the reduction of opiate therapy. These agreements should be signed by patient and physician.
2. Therapeutic Drug Screening to measure progress and provide objective information for the health care provider. Drug screens have been proven to help patients stay safe and comply with opiate therapy.
3. Referral to Pain Specialist -- Physicians should not start treatment plans that call for more than 90mg of morphine per day without a documented consultation with a pain management specialist. Also, a pain management specialist should be consulted after 90 days of opiate therapy if pain has not improved or has become chronic.

DO YOU WANT TO STOP YOUR OPIOID PRESCRIPTION?

- See your doctor before making any changes to your opioid therapy.
- Start a Pain Medication Journal. Keep track of your dosage, how often you take the medication, and the effects on your body (good and bad). Take this journal to your doctor when you want to stop your opioid prescription.
- Ask your physician to consider lowering your opioid dose or developing a plan to taper or end your prescription as soon as you feel your pain is under control.



The content for this brochure was excerpted from materials provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration