

# TREATING PAIN: WHAT ALASKANS SHOULD KNOW

»» If you've had an injury, surgery or dental work, you are likely to have pain. Some pain can be a normal part of healing.

Talk with your doctor to find the most effective treatment with the least risk.

## WHY BE CAUTIOUS WITH OPIOIDS?

Opioid medications are chemically similar to heroin, with serious risk of addiction and overdose, even when taken as directed:



Drug overdose was Alaska's leading cause of accidental death for 2016. Opioid addiction is driving the epidemic.

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services



More than 3 out of 5 drug overdoses involve an opioid.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services



Nationally, 4 out of 5 heroin users started out misusing prescription opioids.

American Society of Addiction Medicine



7% of Alaska youth have misused a prescription pain medication in the past 30 days.

2017 Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey



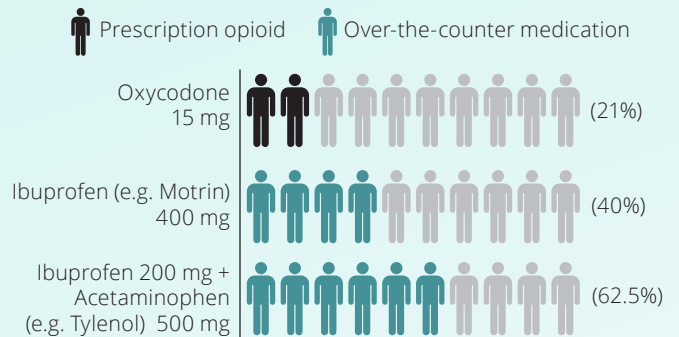
More than 40% of teens who misused or abused a prescription found it in their parent's medicine cabinet.

Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

## NON-OPIOID PAIN TREATMENT

When taking medication for pain, it is often best to start with non-opioid pain treatments. Consider other options that may work just as well, but have far fewer risks.

Over-the-counter options are effective. This graph shows the number of people getting 50% pain relief from acute pain after an operation:



1/NNT, Cochrane Reviews, adapted from graph compiled by Dr. Don Teater, Teater Health Solutions

Depending on the kind of pain, there may be non-medication pain treatment options to consider:



Physical therapy, massage and acupuncture.



Counseling with a psychologist, social worker, psychiatrist or other therapist for help managing the emotional aspect of pain.



Exercises such as walking, pilates, core exercises, swimming, dancing, and yoga.



Other options such as diet and nutrition, art and music therapy, functional medicine, traditional medicine, and meditation.

# OPIOID MEDICATION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

While opioid medications are sometimes the right choice for treating severe pain, such as from cancer or immediately after a surgery, there are many things to consider.

## IF YOU'RE PRESCRIBED AN OPIOID, DISCUSS WITH YOUR PROVIDER ...



- » History of trauma, psychiatric illness including anxiety or depression, and personal or family history of substance use disorder.
- » Medications, alcohol or other substances you may be using.
- » Dosing and timing of opioid medication.
- » Side effects such as dizziness, difficulty breathing, constipation, sexual dysfunction, worsening pain, overdose, or others.

## IF YOU'RE PRESCRIBED AN OPIOID FOR ACUTE PAIN ...



- » Opioid prescriptions should ideally be for no more than a three day supply (often this is as few as 10 pills).
- » The fewer days you're on an opioid, and the lower the dose, the lower the risk of dependence will be. Ask for the lowest dose possible, for the shortest amount of time.

## HELP KEEP YOU AND THOSE AROUND YOU SAFE.



### SECURELY STORE MEDICATION

Store out of reach of children, teens and others for whom they are not intended.



### SAFELY DISPOSE OF UNUSED MEDICATION

- » Pick up a free disposal kit at a State of Alaska Public Health Center to safely dispose of your medications at home.

To find a center nearest you, visit:  
<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Nursing/>

- » Or, find out about upcoming National Prescription Drug Take Back events.

Visit [www.takebackday.dea.gov](http://www.takebackday.dea.gov)



### NEVER SHARE OPIOIDS

Sharing puts people at unnecessary risk for addiction, overdose and even death. Prescription opioids are controlled substances — sharing is illegal.

## "IS IT AN OPIOID?"

Examples of opioid medication:

Codeine  
Fentanyl (Duragesic)  
Hydrocodone (Vicodin, Norco)  
Hydromorphone (Dilaudid)  
Meperidine (Demerol)  
Methadone  
Morphine (MS Contin, Kadian)  
Oxymorphone (Opana)  
Oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet)  
Tramadol (Ultram)

There are many others, so be sure to ask if your medication is an opioid.



American College of  
Emergency Physicians®  
**ALASKA CHAPTER**  
ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Fairbanks Wellness Coalition, Bree Collaborative and the Washington Health Alliance.

### ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

*Effect of a Single Dose of Oral Opioid and Nonopioid Analgesics on Acute Extremity Pain in the Emergency Department: A randomized Trial, JAMA, November 2017. Volume 318, No. 17.*