



## Opioid Pain Relievers: What You Need to Know

### 1. What are opioid pain relievers?

- Opioid pain relievers (opioids) are medications that reduce pain.
- They can cause drowsiness, constipation, dry mouth and nausea.
- If you take more than prescribed or use in ways other than prescribed, opioids can slow your breathing and even lead to death.

### 2. What are the risks?

- In addition to helping pain, opioids can make you feel “high.” This feeling can make it harder to control use.
- They can lead to a fatal overdose. An overdose is more likely if you combine opioids with alcohol or other drugs such as Xanax, Ativan or Valium.
- Opioids can slow reaction time, which can increase the risk of accidents.
- If you use opioid pain relievers regularly, you could have withdrawal symptoms when you stop, such as anxiety, muscle and bone pain, diarrhea, vomiting or restless sleep.

### 3. How can you protect yourself and others?

- Ask your health care provider if it's safe to take opioid pain relievers with other medication.
- Don't drink alcohol if you're taking opioid pain relievers.
- Fill all of your prescriptions at the same pharmacy.
- Keep your medication in a secure place, preferably locked.
- Take your medication exactly as prescribed.
- Be extra careful when driving or operating heavy machinery.
- Never share your medication or take medication prescribed for someone else.
- Flush unused medication down the toilet.
- If someone taking opioids is drowsy and breathing slowly, or can't wake up, call 911 right away.

### 4. What are the signs of a problem?

- You could have a problem with opioid pain relievers if you:
  - are taking more than prescribed
  - have trouble controlling your use
  - take amounts that make you confused or sleepy

**Problem with opioid pain relievers? Help is available. Speak with a health care professional or call 800-LIFENET.**