

Opioid Safety and Disposal

Important Information for Patients and Families

What are Opioids?

Opioids are a type of pain medicine doctors prescribe for pain that cannot be fully managed with over-the-counter medicines.

Opioids may be used as pain treatment, especially for moderate-to-severe pain, and are often used to treat pain after surgery.

What is Opioid Misuse?

Opioids are very powerful medications that can be misused in different ways — that means they are not used as they were meant to be when prescribed. Misuse can lead to abuse, which can then lead to opioid use disorder (OUD).

Potential signs of opioid misuse may include:

- Taking more medicine than the amount your doctor prescribed
- Taking the medicine for longer than your doctor recommended
- Taking medicine that is prescribed to someone else or sharing your opioids with someone else

Side effects of opioids include:

- Slow or shallow breathing
- Excessive sleepiness

If you see any of these symptoms, you should call 911 right away.

THREE SAFETY RULES WHEN USING OPIOIDS

- 1 Always take opioids exactly as prescribed.**
 - Follow the recommended dose and instructions on the label.
 - If you are unsure or confused, ask questions.
- 2 Only give the specific opioid medicine prescribed for your child.**

NEVER take opioids that were prescribed to someone else or give someone else your child's opioid medication.
- 3 Children should never take opioids when they are alone; an adult should always be present.**

It is best if no one takes opioids when they are alone, no matter how old they are.



WHAT TO DO WITH LEFTOVER OPIOIDS

Once pain is treated, there may be extra or unused pills leftover. This leftover medicine should not be saved for future use, and these opioids should be disposed in one of the following ways:

- Ask your local pharmacist what medication disposal programs they have, including medication drop off kiosks or deactivating bags or powders, that when mixed with your medication, destroys it so no one else can misuse it.
- Remove any remaining opioids from the bottle and mix them with something that would taste bad if eaten — such as coffee grounds or cat litter — and then throw the mixture away in the trash.
- Local police departments or medical facilities may host “Take Back” events. These are great events where you can bring leftover medicines to be disposed of properly.
- If you have small children or pets, you should dispose of the medicine as quickly as possible by flushing it down the toilet.