

# 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 chemical cousins of heroin, with serious risks 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.



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 used a prescription pain medication without a doctor's prescription, or differently than how a doctor told them to use it, in the past 30 days.

2017 Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey



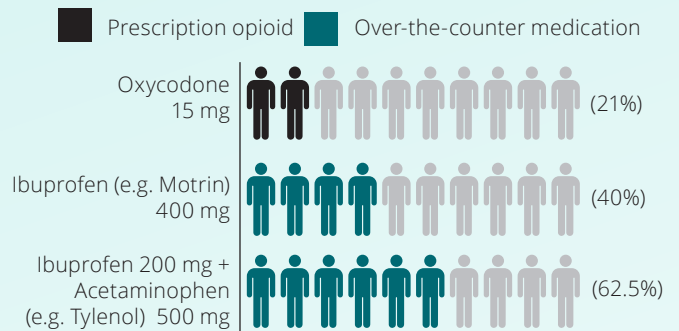
More than **2 out of 5** teens who misused or abused a prescription drug took it from their parent's medicine cabinet.

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 with:



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, yoga and meditation



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

» Opioid medications are sometimes the right choice for treating severe pain, such as from cancer or immediately after a surgery. If you and your provider choose an opioid, here's what you should know.

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



- » Managing your pain better without taking prescription opioids.
- » Prior exposure to trauma, psychiatric history including anxiety or depression, and any history of substance use disorder in you or your family.
- » Medications, alcohol or other substances you may be using.
- » Dosing and timing of opioid medication. 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.
- » Side effects associated with your prescription, and signs of overdose.

## DOSAGES FOR ACUTE PAIN AND INJURY:



Opioid prescriptions should ideally be for no more than a three day supply (often this is as few as 10 pills).

## HELP KEEP YOU AND THOSE AROUND YOU SAFE.

Help prevent prescription opioid misuse in Alaska:



**SECURELY STORE MEDICATION** out of reach of children, teens and others who may misuse them.



### SAFELY DISPOSE OF UNUSED MEDICATION

1. Pick up a disposal kit at the Public Health Center to safely dispose of your medications at home.
2. Visit [takebackday.dea.gov](http://takebackday.dea.gov) to find out about upcoming National Prescription Drug Take Back Day disposal events.



**NEVER SHARE OPIOIDS.** Sharing puts people at unnecessary risk for addiction, overdose and even death. Opioids are controlled substances — sharing is illegal.

## "IS IT AN OPIOID?"

Examples of opioid medication include:

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

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



American College of  
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**ALASKA CHAPTER**  
ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE

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### 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.