



Alameda Alliance for Health

1240 South Loop Road
Alameda, CA 94502

Alliance Health Programs

Phone Number: **1.510.747.4577**

People with hearing and speaking impairments
(CRS/TTY): **711/1.800.735.2929**

livehealthy@alamedaalliance.org

www.alamedaalliance.org

Dear Member,

At Alameda Alliance for Health (Alliance), we are here to help you. ***As your partner in health, we are sending you this letter because our records show that you have been prescribed a high dose of opioids.***

You may have heard that the use of opioids* to relieve pain is a growing safety problem. Overuse has been declared a national emergency. In 2017, 11.4 million people misused prescribed opioids, and close to 50,000 people died due to an opioid overdose.

Long-term opioid use can be helpful for pain but also can be dangerous. High doses can change your brain function to tell your body that you need more opioids.

In this mailing, we would like to share the following handouts to can help you learn more about opioid safety and other treatments:

1. Safety guide for patients and caregivers
2. Treating pain without opioids
3. Medicines for opioid dependence

Please work with your doctor to find out what other treatment options might be best for you.

Best of Health,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Bhatt".

Sanjay Bhatt, MD MS MMM
Medical Director – Quality Improvement
Alameda Alliance for Health

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Helen Lee".

Helen Lee, PharmD, MBA
Senior Director – Pharmacy Services
Alameda Alliance for Health

*Opioids include Vicodin, Norco, oxycodone, and morphine.

Alameda Alliance for Health Opioid Safety Guide for Patients & Caregivers



Prescription Opioids – Pain Relievers

At Alameda Alliance for Health (Alliance), we are here to help you take charge of your health. You can use this safety guide to learn more about how opioids work and how to use them with caution.

Opioids are often used to relieve pain after surgery or injury, or for major health issues like cancer. They can be an important part of your treatment. But they also come with serious risks. You can work with your doctor to make sure you get the safest, and most effective care.

Use Opioids with Caution



Take Medicine Safely.

Don't take your medicine more often than your doctor tells you to.



Keep Others Safe.

Never share your medicines. Keep them secure and out of reach of others. Safely dispose of any unused medicine at a drop-off site near you. To find a drop-off site, please visit [acgov.org/medscoalition](https://www.acgov.org/medscoalition).



Know Your Medicine.

Make sure you know the name of the medicine and how often to take it. Know the side effects and when to call your doctor.



Caution: Avoid Alcohol, Street Drugs, and Certain Other Medicines.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking medicines such as:

- Benzodiazepines (such as Xanax, Ativan, or Valium)
- Muscle relaxants (such as Soma or Flexeril)
- Sleeping pills (such as Ambien or Lunesta)
- Other prescription opioids

Side Effects of Opioids May Include:

- Constipation.
- Feeling sleepy, dizzy, or confused.
- Nausea, vomiting and dry mouth.
- Tolerance – meaning you don't get the same pain relief as you once did.
- Withdrawal symptoms like anxiety, aches and pains, and stomach problems.

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Opioids Are Addictive

Opioid Overdose Can Slow Breathing and Cause Death.

If you suspect overdose, **call 911**. Use naloxone, which can treat opioid overdose, if you have it.

Signs of opioid overdose include:

- Choking or gurgling sounds.
- Falling asleep or losing consciousness.
- Limp body.
- Pale, blue, or cold skin.
- Slow, shallow breathing.
- Small pupils.

Talk to your doctor if you struggle to control your use. You can also call these numbers for concerns about a drug problem:

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services ACCESS Helpline

(Interpreter available)

Toll-Free: **1.800.491.9099**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

National Helpline (English, Spanish)

Toll-Free: **1.800.662.4357**

Talk to Your Doctor



- Ask your doctor for a naloxone prescription in case of overdose. You can also buy it from a pharmacy without a prescription.
- Create a plan to manage your pain.
- Talk about ways to manage your pain without opioids.
- Talk about any and all concerns and side effects.

Content adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose

www.acgov.org/health/documents/OpioidFactSheetfortheCommunity.pdf

Do you need more support? Please call Alliance Health Programs

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OP-1 HED Rev 10/2019

Alameda Alliance for Health Manage Your Pain Without Opioids



Prescription Opioids – Pain Relievers

At Alameda Alliance for Health (Alliance), we are here to help you take charge of your health. You can use this guide to learn about other ways to treat and manage your pain without opioids. Always work with your doctor to find out which treatment is best for you.

Below are some options that may work better and have fewer risks and side effects.



Other Medicines

These can include:

- Pain relievers such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen.
- Some anti-depressants and anti-seizures, which can also be used for nerve pain.



Talk Therapy

Seeing a therapist may help lower stress and anxiety that trigger pain. Talk therapy teaches techniques to change the way you think and behave.



Exercise

Exercise can make your body stronger and feel better.

The Alliance offers:

- Physical therapy.
- Occupational therapy.
- Water (aquatics) therapy.



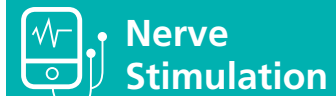
Acupuncture

Acupuncture is a treatment where very thin needles are placed on certain points of your body. This may help with many types of pain.



Chiropractic Therapy

Chiropractors adjust the spine or other parts of the body. This may help with back and neck pain.



Nerve Stimulation

This device sends a mild electric current through nerves to block pain signals. One common device is called Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS).

For help finding these services, please ask your doctor or call the Alliance Member Services Department at **1.510.747.4567**.

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Alameda Alliance for Health Medicines for Opioid Dependence



Prescription Opioids – Pain Relievers

At Alameda Alliance for Health (Alliance), we are here to help you take charge of your health. You can use this guide to help control your use of opioids.

Even when opioids are taken as the doctor ordered, they can still cause dependence or addiction. To treat opioid dependence, doctors combine medicines with behavioral therapy. This is called Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT).

Medicines to Reduce Opioid Cravings

If you find it hard to control your use of opioids, MAT can help. Ask your doctor about medicines to reduce opioid cravings.

The three (3) medicines below may work for you:

- 1. Buprenorphine** is a safer choice for pain and may help prevent opioid cravings.
- 1. Methadone** tricks the brain into thinking it's still getting opioids. This is given at an opioid treatment program (OTP) clinic.
- 3. Naltrexone** lessens the desire to take opioids. This is given at your doctor's office.



Medicine to Reverse Overdose

Naloxone can save someone from an opioid overdose. It begins working within two (2) to three (3) minutes. The medicine comes in a spray (left picture) or injection device (right picture) that are both easy to use.



Examples of Naloxone.

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