

# 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. Use this safety guide to learn 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. Work with your doctor to make sure you get the safest, and most effective care with your opioid prescription.

### 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](http://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 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
- Increased sensitivity to pain
- 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

**Continued on the back →**

## 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 opioid use. You can also call these numbers for concerns about a drug use problem:

#### **Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services ACCESS Helpline**

(Interpreter available)

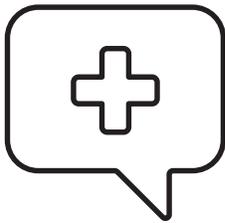
Toll-Free: **1.800.491.9099**

#### **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/](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/)

[www.acgov.org/health/documents/OpioidFactSheetfortheCommunity.pdf](http://www.acgov.org/health/documents/OpioidFactSheetfortheCommunity.pdf)

### Do you need more support?

Please call Alliance Member Services Department

Monday – Friday, 8 am – 5 pm

Phone Number: **1.510.747.4567** • Toll-Free: **1.877.932.2738**

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

[www.alamedaalliance.org](http://www.alamedaalliance.org)

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