



**A safety guide for
opioid prescriptions**



PROTECTING ★ THE ★ UNPROTECTED

How to keep you and your family safe

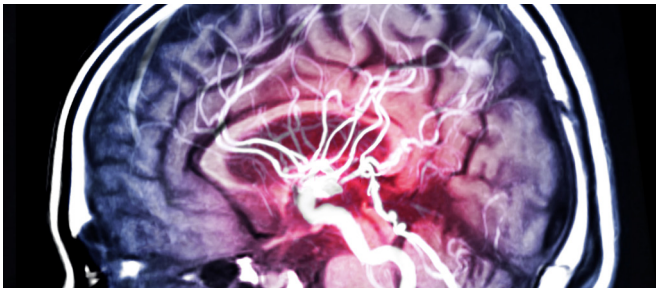


Bringing any opioid into your home poses the risk of addiction. These tips will help you protect yourself and your loved ones.



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Opioids change people's brains

Beginning to misuse opioids might be a voluntary choice, but the drugs can rewire a person's brain so making a different choice becomes a challenge. With chronic use, opioids alter:

How the brain's reward pathway works.

- Dopamine, a natural chemical in your brain, helps you experience satisfaction and remember what activities cause that pleasure. Opioids reduce your sensitivity to dopamine by changing how it moves in your brain and the enzymes that control it. One result is that ever-increasing amounts of opioids must be consumed to achieve the original effect.

How the brain remembers.

- Opioids change how the brain's memory pathways work, which makes quitting trickier. Just seeing an object or a person that your brain has associated with opioids can stimulate those changed pathways and trigger a relapse.

These brain changes help explain why substance use disorder is considered a disease. The cause-and-effect connection is not unlike how a bad diet and lack of exercise can result in diabetes.

Did you know?

- Opioid overdoses kill 130 Americans — including about nine Ohioans — every day.
- Filling an opioid prescription — morphine, OxyContin or methadone, for example — makes it almost three times more likely that a family member will overdose.
- Ohio saw a 40% drop in deaths attributed to prescription opioids — the biggest decrease among the 50 states — in 2018, the most recent year for which data is available.

Ohioans are working hard to turn the tide on the public health emergency caused by a flood of prescription opioids. A big part of the solution has centered on thousands of state residents responsibly managing their prescriptions.





Safe prescriptions

1

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR AND PHARMACIST.

If you're being prescribed an opioid, be sure to get clear information on:

- Why you're getting that medication instead of an alternative pain treatment.
- What danger signs to heed.
- How to correctly follow the prescribed dosage.

Be an advocate for your health: If you know that an opioid would be a risk for you, tell your doctor that.

2

FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS EXACTLY.

The best way to fight opioid use disorder is to avoid it in the first place, and that starts with using opioids exactly as your doctor instructs. Especially if you struggle with chronic pain, it can be tempting to overuse opioids to get more relief. In reality, though, excessive use only numbs your body to the effects more quickly.

3**ENLIST HELP AND STORE PILLS SAFELY.**

When appropriate, talk to family members about opioid prescriptions. Help each other strictly follow the directions. Also:

- Don't share any prescription medication.
- Track usage of prescription pills to safeguard against pilfering.
- Lock up addictive prescriptions, for example, in a simple lockbox meant for money or documents. The extra step may be an inconvenience, but it will keep the drugs away from a loved one who might be tempted and give you a chance to reconsider if you find yourself reaching to misuse the drugs.
- Store prescriptions in a high location out of the reach of children (to prevent accidental poisoning).

If you have an older child or a teenager, use the prescription as an opportunity to talk about the dangers of misusing medications. Having this talk cuts their risk of future drug abuse in half.

4**SAFELY DISPOSE OF LEFTOVER OPIOIDS.**

Disposing of unused medication is essential so that leftover opioids in the home don't tempt family members to misuse them or give them to others. But many medications cannot be safely thrown in the trash or flushed down a toilet. The best ways to dispose of opioids:

- Take advantage of one of the drug drop-box locations throughout Ohio. (A list can be found at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/SCOPE.)
- Participate in a drug take-back day, such as those organized by the Ohio Attorney General's Office or the Drug Enforcement Administration.

SCOPE

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost's **Scientific Committee on Opioid Prevention & Education (SCOPE)** is made up of experts from the fields of medicine, behavioral economics and data analysis. Together, the group searches for science-guided, evidence-driven ways to prevent opioid addiction in Ohio.

For more information, visit www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/SCOPE, call **800-282-0515** or email **SCOPE@ohioattorneygeneral.gov**.



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