

# Opioids: Know What's Safe

Doctors care about their patients' health and safety.

And your doctor cares about you.

That's why when you get a prescription for an opioid, your doctor may spend extra time talking about the medicine, including how to take it safely, where to store it, and how to get rid of it.

Opioids are usually prescribed for the kind of pain that comes with cancer or after a serious surgery.

And they're safest when you follow their directions.

When doctors prescribe opioids, they must follow strict rules that are there to protect you and others.

That's because opioids can cause serious problems if they're not used correctly.

So if you take an opioid, work closely with your doctor.

Be sure your doctor knows about your mental health history and any drug or alcohol problems you've had.

Your doctor may ask you to sign an agreement that says you will take the medicine exactly as prescribed, that you'll be careful with it, and that you won't share it with others.

Like many patients, you may have drug tests while you're taking opioids.

You probably don't need an agreement to know this, but remember to store your medicines where others--including children and pets--can't get to them.

Talk to your doctor about the safest way to get rid of unused medicines.

Now you may never need it, but you might ask your doctor about a naloxone rescue kit.

Naloxone--also called Narcan--is a medicine that can stop an opioid overdose and save a life.

It's another way to protect yourself and others.

When you take an opioid for a while, your body gets used to it, so it can feel like it's not working as well as it did at first.

If that happens, tell your doctor.

You might need to have your medicine adjusted or you might need to add another treatment.

By working closely with your doctor, you can find ways to manage your pain that are safe and that feel right for you.