



OxyContin®

and other
oxycodone-based
prescription drugs



Even drugs prescribed by your doctor have the potential for misuse and dependency. Take care when taking oxycodone-based prescription drugs. They are helpful when taken exactly as prescribed but can be harmful, or even lethal, if abused.

How can I reduce my risk?

Reduce your risk by:

- weighing the benefits – and the risks – before taking the medication
- considering your personal or family history of substance abuse
- carefully following prescription directions
- never sharing your prescription medication
- never taking someone else's prescription medication

What is Oxycodone? OxyContin®? What is it used for?

Oxycodone is an opioid-based prescription drug often used as a pain reliever to treat moderate to severe short-term and long-term pain, chronic pain, pain related to cancer and other debilitating and terminal conditions.

OxyContin® is a semi-synthetic, opioid-class (narcotic) pain reliever formulated to release the drug oxycodone over a long period of time. When used as directed, OxyContin® is effective and safe.

When used outside of a physician's direction, OxyContin® can cause euphoria, (i.e. a high) sometimes making it prone to misuse and dependence. As well, chewing or breaking OxyContin® pills can lead to overdose because too much of the drug is released all at once.

What are common street names?

- Oxy
- Oxycotton
- Kicker
- OC
- Killer
- Hillbilly heroin

What are the symptoms of overdose?

- Slow breathing
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Constricted pupils
- Coma
- Seizures
- Weakness
- Cold and clammy skin
- Loss of consciousness
- Death

How can I tell if I am becoming dependent on opioids?

Tolerance to opioids develops fairly rapidly, making higher doses necessary to maintain intensity of effects. Most opioids are highly addictive and misuse may result in dependence. Once dependency occurs, stopping the drug becomes challenging because of withdrawal. Withdrawal symptoms include severe anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, profuse sweating, runny nose and eyes, muscle spasms including stomach cramps, chills, shivering and tremors. These symptoms can begin to occur four to five hours after last dose.

If the drug is prescribed, what is the harm in sharing it?

This medication is not to be shared with others. It is prescribed to an individual based on a thorough assessment of medical need. Sharing this medication

is against the law and can be lethal. When this medication is shared with people for whom it is not intended, there is increased potential for misuse, dependency and accidental overdose. When taken as directed by a physician, most patients will not develop a dependency to this drug. However, similar to other opioids, misuse can easily lead to dependence and tolerance to oxycodone, requiring more frequent and higher doses.

How can I take this medicine safely?

- Before using opioid pain medications, discuss the benefits and risks with your health care provider.
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist about your use of other medications, natural health products, and your use of alcohol and illegal drugs. This will help avoid potentially harmful drug interactions.
- Discuss any concerns you may have about personal or family history of substance abuse.
- Take opioid medication exactly as directed, right dose and right time. Talk to your doctor about what to do if you miss a dose.
- Follow all the directions that may come with your medication, such as not driving and avoiding the use of alcohol.
- Store opioid medication in a safe place and keep track of the amount of medication you have.
- Never share prescription opioid pain medication. It is illegal and unsafe.
- Return any unused medication to the pharmacy for safe disposal.

Where can I get more information?

Learn more about opioid dependency by visiting:

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM)
www.afm.mb.ca

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA)
www.ccsa.ca

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
www.camh.net

Health Canada
www.hc-sc.gc.ca

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
www.nida.nih.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
www.samhsa.gov

For a list of government-funded addictions services, please visit:
www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/addictions/adult.html

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional health advice. Every effort was made to ensure accurate information at the time of publication.

