

Opioid Safety

Using your pain medication safely

Opioid pain medicine can be an important part of your treatment plan when it is used exactly as prescribed. It also carries serious risks, including dependence and overdose. These steps help keep you and the people you live with safe.

Take it exactly as prescribed

- Take only your prescribed dose, on schedule. If your pain gets worse, call us instead of taking more.
- Never share your medicine or take anyone else's.
- **Do not combine it** with alcohol, benzodiazepines (such as Xanax or Valium), sleep aids or other sedating medicines unless your provider approves. Together they can dangerously slow your breathing.
- Tell us about every medicine and supplement you take.
- Do not drive or operate machinery until you know how the medicine affects you.

Store it securely

- Keep it in its original container, locked up and out of reach of children, teens, guests and pets. One dose can be fatal to a child.
- Count your pills regularly so you notice if any go missing.

Dispose of what you don't need

1. **Use a take-back option first.** Tennessee has permanent drug drop boxes in every county, often at pharmacies and police or sheriff's offices. Search "Tennessee Rx take back" to find the nearest one.
2. **No take-back nearby?** Most opioids, including oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine and fentanyl patches, are on the FDA's flush list and can be flushed. Flush only medicines on that list.
3. Scratch out your name and personal information on the label before you throw away the empty bottle.

Keep naloxone on hand

Naloxone (Narcan) can reverse an opioid overdose. The nasal spray is sold **without a prescription** at most pharmacies. Keep it where you store your medicine, and make sure family members know where it is and how to use it.

Know the signs of an overdose

Signs

- Can't be woken up, or is unconscious
- Slow, shallow or no breathing, or choking or gurgling sounds
- Blue or gray lips or fingernails
- Very small "pinpoint" pupils

If you aren't sure, treat it like an overdose.

What to do

1. **Call 911** and give naloxone if you have it.
2. Try to keep the person awake and breathing.
3. Lay them on their side to prevent choking.
4. Stay with them until help arrives.

Help is available

Emergency
911

Treatment referrals (24/7)
SAMHSA 1-800-662-4357

TN REDLINE (call or text)
800-889-9789

Questions? Call PMG
615.941.8501