

An Opioid Medication is Currently on Your Active Medication List (Home Medications or Prescribed)

What are opioids?

Opioids are narcotic pain medications used to help with moderate-to-severe pain and are often prescribed after a surgery or injury. The majority of evidence shows that opioids are not effective for long-term use for many common sources of pain, such as back pain, fibromyalgia, diabetic nerve pain, and others. There is evidence that other options do a better job controlling pain with fewer risks.

Examples of opioids include: codeine, fentanyl (Duragesic, Actiq), hydrocodone (Hysingla ER, Zohydro ER), hydrocodone/acetaminophen (Lorcet, Lortab, Norco, Vicodin), hydrocodone/ibuprofen (Vicoprofen), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), meperidine (Demerol), methadone, morphine (MS Contin, MS-IR), oxycodone (OxyContin, Roxicodone), oxycodone/acetaminophen (Percocet, Endocet, Roxicet), oxycodone (Opana), tapentadol (Nucynta), tramadol (Ultram)

What are the risks and side effects of opioid use?

Prescription opioids come with serious risks of **addiction** and **overdose**, especially with long-term use. An opioid overdose, often seen as slowed breathing, can cause sudden death. This overdose can happen by accident.

Side effects of opioids include:	Risks of opioids include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nausea, vomiting, constipation, and dry mouth• Confusion and depression• Itching and sweating• Sleepiness and dizziness• Low levels of testosterone (lower sex drive, energy, strength)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tolerance – over time, you might need more medication to get the same level of pain relief• Physical dependence – your body becomes physically in need of the medication and you have symptoms of withdrawal when a medication is stopped
Risks may be increased in people who:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take other medications along with opioids such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Benzodiazepines (Xanax, Ativan, Valium, etc.)○ Muscle relaxers (Soma, Flexeril, Robaxin, Skelaxin, etc.)○ Sleep aids (Ambien, Lunesta, etc.)○ Other prescription opioids○ Drinking alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a history of drug misuse, substance use disorder, or overdose• Mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety• Sleep apnea• Older age• Pregnancy

What are signs I need help? Where can I get help?

- You spend a lot of time trying to get opioid medications
- You need more medication to get the same effect
- You take more than you should or for a longer period
- You experience withdrawal if you miss a dose
- You cannot cut down on the amount you take even if you try
- Opioids are causing problems in your life, but you can't stop

IF YOU NEED HELP for substance abuse problems, talk with your primary care provider and call a local resource:

- **Coastal Horizons** – 910-790-0187
- **Trillium Health Resources** – 877-685-2415
- **Wilmington Treatment Center** – 910-758-2023
- **New Hanover Mobile Crisis Team** – 866-437-1821
- **Narcotics Anonymous** www.na.org
- **RHA Health Services** – 910-632-2191 or visit www.rhbehavioralhealth.org
- **SAMHSA's National Helpline** – 1-800-662-HELP or visit <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/> to find a treatment center near you

How can I safely take opioids?

Talk to your health care provider about ways to manage your pain that do not include prescription opioids. Some of these options may work better and have fewer risks and side effects than opioids.

Only take your medications as directed by your prescriber

Do not take more tablets/capsules than prescribed or more often than prescribed

Do not crush long-acting tablets

These are meant to work slowly for a long period; crushing them may give you an incorrect dose or ruin your medication

Do not share your medications

The dose that works for you may be too high for another person and cause life-threatening effects

Medication should be locked in a safe and secure place

Keep away from pets, children, friends, family, and visitors

Never sell your prescription/medication

Where can I get rid of my unused opioids?

Permanent medication drop boxes are located at: NHRMC Outpatient Pharmacy, NHRMC ED North and Pender Memorial Hospital. See our website below or scan the QR code for additional locations in New Hanover and surrounding counties.

<https://www.nhrmc.org/medication-disposal>

