

Narcotics Safety Information

Please read this handout carefully and share it with family members or caregivers. This

information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care, as only your doctor can treat a medical problem. Talk to your healthcare provider about the benefits of the medicine recommended.

Your doctor has prescribed narcotics to help control your pain. If you develop any side effects, stop taking the medication and tell your healthcare provider right away. Narcotics are very effective for controlling pain, but improper use or abuse can be harmful and even fatal.

Always Take Narcotics Exactly as Directed

- Taking extra narcotics or combining with other drugs, alcohol or over-the-counter products can be harmful or fatal.
- Tell your prescriber about all healthcare products and drugs (prescribed or not) you take and your complete medical history.
- Take only the amount listed on the bottle and only at the time listed. If you forget to take a dose on time, take it as soon as you remember. **DO NOT** take an extra dose to make up for a missed one.
- **ALWAYS** follow the instructions on the bottle.
- **DO NOT** crush or split tablets, as this can change the effects of the narcotic and could cause overdose.
- If taking in liquid form, use a marked spoon or dropper to measure the correct dose. Using a household spoon can give an inaccurate dosage and could be harmful.
- To avoid missing or taking an extra dose of narcotics, use a drug chart to keep track of each dose, especially if you are taking the drugs on an “as needed” basis. If you are forgetful, have someone else give you each dose and keep a record of it.
- Tell **ALL** your healthcare providers you are taking narcotics so they do not prescribe other drugs that might change the effects of the narcotics.

If you have questions about this information, please contact your CareWorks Case Manager or your healthcare provider.

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Side Effects of Narcotics

Alert family members or caregivers of important warning signs that require immediate attention. If you have any of the followings signs, get help right away:

- Difficulty Staying Awake or Being Awakened
- Difficult or Slow Breathing
- Loud or Unusual Snoring
- Fast Heartbeat
- Unusual Dizziness or Loss of Consciousness (fainting)

More Narcotics Facts

- Narcotics may cause constipation and your physician or pharmacist can recommend approaches for prevention or treatment.
- Certain side effects usually become milder or go away with time, such as lightheaded feeling, nausea, upset stomach or mild drowsiness. Possible other side effects that can be longer lasting include itching, dry mouth, flushing or increased sweating. Allergic reactions causing a rash, hives or swelling are rare yet require prompt medical attention.
- **DO NOT** drink alcohol while taking narcotics. Be careful of other drugs that may cause drowsiness, such as allergy, cough or cold medicines, sleep or anxiety medicines, or other pain drugs.
- Although uncommon, tell your healthcare provider if you experience confusion, mood changes (depression or anxious), shaking, blurred vision or difficulty urinating.
- You should refrain from driving, operating heavy machinery or other activities requiring balance or focused concentration until the effects of narcotics are known. This typically can take a week or longer.
- Unless prescribed on an “as needed basis,” contact your physician if you want to stop taking narcotics.

Store Narcotics Safely

Narcotics must be kept in a safe place where children, adults or others cannot gain access. Never share narcotics with anyone as even a single unprescribed dose could be harmful or even fatal.

- Do not keep narcotics on counters, night stands, bathroom cabinets or other obvious places. Store in a secure location or locked box or cabinet.
- Remember, persons you may least suspect might look for drugs like narcotics for illegal purposes.

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