The Prescription Opioid: NOT JUST a PILL

Did you know that prescription opioids can have effects similar to heroin when taken in doses or in ways other than what your doctor prescribes?¹

Even if you take your pain medicine as prescribed by your doctor, these powerful pills can increase your risk of developing potential adverse effects, like addiction. Opioids are not just “pills.” If you have pain, taking a prescription pain medication is a serious act to consider.

In 2013, 207 million prescriptions were written for opioid pain medications.²

By 2002, death certificates more commonly listed opioid analgesic poisoning as a cause of death over heroin or cocaine.³

In the 1960s, more than 80 percent of people who began using opioids started first with heroin.⁴

Today, nearly 80 percent of people who use opioids say their first regular use was in the form of a prescription pain reliever.⁵

Talk to Your Doctor

**Before taking a prescription pain pill,** talk to your doctor. Ask:

- What’s my risk of becoming addicted to this medicine?
- Does this prescription interfere with any other medicine I’m currently taking?
- Am I taking the lowest dosage possible for the shortest amount of time?
- If I take this medicine, what should I do when I’m ready to stop?
- Are there other non-opioid medications I could take instead?
- Are there other treatments I could try instead of medication?

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6. This material was originally prepared by Quality Insights and has been adapted for use by TMF Health Quality Institute, the Medicare Quality Innovation Network Quality Improvement Organization, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents do not necessarily reflect CMS policy. 11SOW-QINQIO-C3.6-18-01