

# 5 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT USING OPIOIDS FOR BACK PAIN OR OSTEOARTHRITIS

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## What should I do about my pain?

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Medicines are just a small part of the management of back pain and osteoarthritis. Other options such as exercise, physiotherapy and maintaining a healthy weight help manage the pain. Some medicines like opioids may have a limited role in management of back pain and osteoarthritis but you need to be aware of the risks. Your health professional can discuss the options with you.

You have been prescribed an opioid, a type of pain medicine (eg, oxycodone, tramadol, codeine). These medicines may provide a small benefit for some people but have significant side effects and can be addictive. To find out more about the specific opioid medicine you have been prescribed, ask for a Consumer Medicines Information leaflet from your doctor or pharmacist.

**It's important to only use opioids for the shortest time and at the lowest dose possible.**



## Things to consider

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Ask your health professional these **5 questions** and any others you may have.

**1**

### What might be causing the pain?

The cause of the pain and how long it is expected to last depends on your situation. In some cases, there may not be a known cause for the pain.

**2**

### What are the risks and benefits of this medicine?

Opioids may reduce pain – they won't take the pain away completely. Any benefit needs to be weighed against potential harms. Opioids have major side effects, including the possibility of dependence and overdose. The risk of any of these occurring increases if you take the medicine often or use a large amount.

**3**

### How long should I take this medicine?

Opioids should only be used for the shortest time and at the lowest dose possible. **It is possible this medicine may not work effectively to control the pain.** If this is the case, discuss with your doctor or pharmacist when you can lower your dose or stop the medicine altogether.

**4**

### Is there anything else I can do to help the pain?

**Yes.** There are lots of effective and safer ways to manage pain, building activity slowly, applying heat or cold, exercise and avoiding bed rest. Most people need to use a combination of strategies.

**5**

### What is my pain management plan?

Work with your health professional to develop a plan that works for you. You can use the pain management plan template over the page.



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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# ACTION PLAN



## At home

Use these top tips to keep you and others around you safe while you are taking opioids.



Do not share your medicine with others



Keep out of reach of children and pets



Opioids can affect driving. It may not be safe for you to drive



Let your doctor know if you are taking other medicines that also make you feel sleepy



Take leftover medicines to your pharmacy for disposal



Opioids mixed with alcohol can make you feel very drowsy

## Pain management plan

### My goal.....

There are many ways you can manage back pain and/or osteoarthritis. Work with your health professional to create your personal pain management plan. Some strategies they may suggest are listed below.

Physical (body)		Psychological (mind)	Social (lifestyle)
<input type="checkbox"/> Land or water-based exercise <input type="checkbox"/> Heat, cooling <input type="checkbox"/> Spinal manipulation <input type="checkbox"/> Massage	<input type="checkbox"/> Yoga/TaiChi/Pilates <input type="checkbox"/> Acupuncture <input type="checkbox"/> Walking stick/cane <input type="checkbox"/> Knee brace	<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive behavioural therapy <input type="checkbox"/> Mindfulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a healthy weight <input type="checkbox"/> Stay physically active <input type="checkbox"/> Keep working
Pain medicines			
<input type="checkbox"/> Paracetamol ..... <input type="checkbox"/> Anti-inflammatory medicine ..... <input type="checkbox"/> Opioid ..... <input type="checkbox"/> Other .....			
Other notes			



## Ask your health professional

When should I seek urgent medical attention?

When should I next see my doctor?

I have ongoing pain which has lasted for more than 3 months. What should I do?

nps.org.au

Level 7/418A Elizabeth Street Surry Hills NSW 2010  
 PO Box 1147 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
 ☎ 02 8217 8700 📠 02 9211 7578 ✉ info@nps.org.au

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