

Be smart, Be safe: Guidelines for prescription pain medications

There can be medical benefits to prescription pain medications (opioids), but only when closely monitored by a doctor and used by the person for which they are prescribed. Use the information below to give a brief oral presentation to your parent or guardian. Then return the signed form to class.



Actions to take if your doctor prescribes pain medications:

1. If your doctor recommends that you take prescription pain medications, ask about non-opioid options.
2. Ask your doctor about possible dangers and side effects.
3. Tell your doctor about any other medications you're taking, including vitamins and supplements.
4. Follow your doctor's orders, monitor how you're feeling, and report back concerns immediately.
5. Do not mix medications with alcohol or other drugs.
6. Do not share medication with family, friends, or anyone else.
7. When finished with your prescription, dispose of remaining medication properly. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has a "Safe Drug Disposal" video available on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/agwaF2kYiUA>).

Prescription pain medications can be extremely addictive. Taking them for even minor pain can lead to dependence and addiction very quickly. Over time, people who use these drugs need more and more (this is called "tolerance") to get the same effects. Because this can happen, doctors have a responsibility to be very careful when prescribing these drugs: 1) to prescribe only a dose that will work for a specific patient, and 2) to prescribe the medicine only for a limited period of time. But the patient also has an equally important responsibility: to take only what is needed to manage the pain.

Continued use of pain medications can cause both mental and physical cravings. When teens become addicted to these drugs, finding and using the drug becomes the main focus of life. Taking the drug away causes depression and anxiety and other feelings from "withdrawal," including muscle cramps, aches, sweating, chills, nausea, shaking, and sleeplessness. Even after getting treatment for addiction, the chance of becoming addicted again, or "relapsing," is high.

Misuse or abuse of prescription pain medications can have permanent effects on the brain, including loss of interest in everything except the drug, loss of memory, inability to enjoy normal pleasures, depression, impaired brain functioning, and can lead to abuse of other substances, like Fentanyl and heroin.

Parent or Guardian: Sign if your child reviewed this with you - _____

Student Name _____

Date _____ **Period** _____