

## Opioids

**Common Use:** Relief of moderate to severe acute or chronic pain.

### Key Tips:

- Do not operate heavy machinery, drive, or do other dangerous activities when taking opioids, especially when you first start taking these medications or if your dose has been increased. These medications may make you sleepy, lightheaded, or may prevent you from reacting quickly while doing these things.
- You should not drink alcohol when taking opioids. Drinking alcohol with opioids may increase your risk of dangerous side effects, such as slowing down your breathing or decreasing your level of consciousness.
- Opioids may cause constipation.
- Do not take an opioid any more frequently than what is prescribed. If you are not getting adequate pain relief, call your physician to discuss your pain management options.
- Caution is advised when taking opioids with other medications that may cause drowsiness, such as anti-anxiety medications, tranquilizers, muscle relaxants, sleeping pills, antihistamines, and other pain medications. These medications may increase the effectiveness of the opioid, causing more drowsiness or a decreased level of consciousness. It is important to let your physician know what medications you are already taking before starting an opioid.
- For women of child-bearing years or nursing, tell your physician if you are pregnant, plan on becoming pregnant, or nursing while taking opioids. Opioids may harm your unborn baby. Opioids pass into breast milk and may harm your baby.
- Some opioids also contain acetaminophen, such as Percocet or Vicodin. Consult with your doctor if also taking over-the-counter acetaminophen medications (Tylenol), to prevent an overdose.

### Common Side Effects with Opioids:

- Constipation
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Drowsiness
- Sleepiness
- Sweating
- Lightheadedness

### Warning Signs

#### **Call your doctor if you have any of these signs:**

- Your breathing slows down, becomes shallow, or you have difficulty breathing
- Worsening feelings of dizziness or lightheadedness
- Confusion
- Decreased level of consciousness

**If you notice other side effects that you think are caused by this medicine, tell your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.**

**Reference:** U.S. Food and Drug Administration at <http://www.fda.gov>