

# Safe Use and Disposal of Opioid Medicines

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## What are opioids?

Opioids are strong prescription pain medicines used to manage moderate to severe pain. Common opioids include oxycodone, morphine, methadone, and hydromorphone.

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## Are opioids addictive?

Yes. Opioids can be addictive and misused. The amount of medicine your child is prescribed is based on their weight, other medical conditions, and type of pain. When given appropriately and for a short time, most children and teens do not become addicted to pain medicine. For more information, see our handout “Acute Pain”: [seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE503.pdf](https://seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE503.pdf)

If you are concerned about addiction, talk to your healthcare provider.

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## How do I give opioids safely?

- Give your child the medicine exactly as prescribed. Giving more medicine is very serious and can cause your child’s breathing to stop, which could lead to death.
  - In many situations, non-opioid pain medicine such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) are a good starting point and may be prescribed by your doctor. If your child is still experiencing significant pain, opioids may be added.
  - Additional medicines that may be prescribed for anxiety or muscle spasms, such as diazepam and lorazepam, should only be given with opioids if specifically prescribed by your doctor. Taking these medicines with opioids can cause significant drowsiness and worsen the risk for breathing issues.
  - Prevent children, friends, and family from misusing the medicine by storing them securely. They can be secured in a medication lock box, locked cabinet, locked closet, or out of reach. When no longer needed, use a take back program to get rid of unused opioid medicine.
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## When should I call the doctor?

**Call 911**, if your child:

- Is having difficulty breathing or will not wake up

Call your child’s doctor if:

- Their pain is not controlled when taking the medicine as directed
  - They have side effects such as nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain, which are signs that your child is not tolerating the medicine
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### To Learn More

- Ocean Pharmacy  
206-987-2138
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](https://seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

### How can I safely dispose of opioid medicines?

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#### **If you're at Seattle Children's Hospital:**

Use the medicine disposal drop-off kiosk located in the Forest B lobby on the first floor. It is located across from the Forest Outpatient Pharmacy.

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#### **If you're in Washington state:**

Find a medicine take back location near you at:  
[takebackyourmeds.org/](https://takebackyourmeds.org/)

Or request a pre-paid, pre-addressed mail-back package at no cost at:  
[med-project.org/locations/washington/mail-back-services/](https://med-project.org/locations/washington/mail-back-services/)

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#### **If you're out of Washington state:**

Find the nearest medicine take back location near you at:  
[deادiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal/takeback/](https://deادiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/)

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#### **If you have no other options:**

Follow Food and Drug Administration instructions at:  
[fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-dispose-non-flush-list-medicine-trash](https://fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-dispose-non-flush-list-medicine-trash)

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