

## Why Were You Prescribed Opioids?

Prescription opioids can be used to treat moderate-to-severe pain and are often prescribed following surgery or injury, or for severe health conditions determined by your doctor.

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the acceptance and use of prescription opioids for the treatment of chronic, non-cancer pain, such as back pain or osteoarthritis, despite serious risks and the lack of evidence about their long-term effectiveness.

## What to Do if You're Prescribed Opioids?

- Understand that prescription opioids can be helpful as well as addictive and dangerous.
- Ask if what you are being prescribed is an opioid and, if so, if there are non-addictive alternatives available.
- If possible, consider using alternatives such as physical therapy, massage, acupuncture or over-the-counter medications.
- If alternatives are not available, use your prescription as directed by your doctor and only when necessary.
- **Store properly. Dispose safely.**

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If you know someone who is struggling with opioid or prescription pain medication misuse or addictions, please visit [guideinc.org/rxresources](http://guideinc.org/rxresources).

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## PRESCRIPTION PAIN MEDICATION



## What Supporters of Student-Athletes Need to Know



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## WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

**Opioids** are a class of drugs used to reduce pain.

**Prescription Opioids** can be prescribed by doctors to treat moderate to severe pain, but can also have serious risks and side effects. Common types are oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), morphine and methadone.

**Fentanyl** is a synthetic opioid pain reliever. It is 80-100X more potent than other opioids and approved for treating severe pain, typically advanced cancer pain.

**Heroin** is an illegal opioid. Prescription opioids can be a "gateway drug" to heroin when prescriptions expire or are discontinued.

## How Do I Advocate for My Student-Athlete?

- Ask how the opioid will react with already prescribed medication to avoid adverse reactions.
- Ask about alternatives including other, non-opioid medications.
- Know your student-athlete is predisposed to addiction if s/he has...
  - a family or personal history of alcohol, tobacco or substance misuse.
  - mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.
- Know that you can refuse a prescription if you do not want it.

## Your Student-Athlete is Injured. What's next?

- Seek medical treatment or evaluation immediately.
- If prescription opioids are necessary, educate yourself about the prescription.
- Use opioid medication correctly and for short-term use.
- Involve coaches for support and guidance for a healthy recovery.
- Engage in alternatives for pain relief such as physical therapy.

## RISKS OF USING OPIOIDS

The risks of using opioids include misuse, opioid use disorder/addiction, overdose or even death.



Opioid misuse can lead to poor decision making, loss of friends and increased family stress.

Student-athletes who misuse opioids can lose their spot on their sports team, fall behind in class and lose scholarships.

## KEY TIPS FOR RECOVERY:

- Keep in contact with doctors and the team's athletic trainers
- Use your prescription only as directed by a doctor
- Complete any therapy or exercises outlined by doctors