

# Do's and Don'ts for the Safe Use of Prescription Opioids



Prescription opioid pain medications are an important part of the treatment of pain; however, life-threatening side effects can occur, even in patients who are taking their opioids as directed.<sup>1</sup> On average, 44 people die each day from prescription opioids and over 80% of those are unintentional.<sup>2,3</sup>

**Here are some important things to keep in mind when taking prescription opioids:**



## Be Aware

Learn the signs and symptoms of an opioid emergency, such as an accidental overdose<sup>1</sup>



## Tell Someone

Teach your family and friends the signs and symptoms of an opioid emergency, such as an accidental overdose, and how to respond<sup>1</sup>

## Call Your Healthcare Provider



If your pain isn't adequately managed, talk to your healthcare provider. Do not take more medicine than has been prescribed to you<sup>1</sup>



## Alcohol Abstinence

Never drink alcohol while taking opioids. Mixing alcohol with opioids can cause potentially life-threatening adverse reactions<sup>1</sup>

## Drug-to-Drug Interactions



Tell your healthcare provider about all other medications you are taking. Serious interactions can occur between prescription opioids and other medications like certain antibiotics or medicines taken for anxiety<sup>1</sup>

## Safeguard Your Medication

Lock up your opioids in a safe place at all times and dispose of unused opioids properly<sup>1,3</sup>



## Take As Directed

Take opioids only as your healthcare provider has prescribed<sup>1</sup>



## Be Prepared

Talk to your healthcare provider about naloxone to help reverse the life-threatening effects of an opioid emergency until emergency help can arrive<sup>5</sup>

Visit [www.AmericaStartsTalking.com](http://www.AmericaStartsTalking.com) for more information

1 SAMHSA Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit Safety Advice for Patients. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 13-4742.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Vital Signs Fact Sheet. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/opioid-prescribing>. Accessed May 2015.

3 Tennessee Department of Health. Available at: [http://health.state.tn.us/MCH/PDFs/VIPP/Drug%20Overdose%20Deaths%202012%20 Report.pdf](http://health.state.tn.us/MCH/PDFs/VIPP/Drug%20Overdose%20Deaths%202012%20Report.pdf). Accessed May 2015.

4 Pain Treatment Topics. Opioids911-Safety. Available at: <http://opioids911.org/media/pdf/Op911-PatientInstructions.pdf>. Accessed May 2015.

5 Harris, P. (2015, June 29). It's about saving lives: Increasing access to naloxone.

<https://www.ama-assn.org/ama/ama-wire/post/its-saving-lives-increasing-access-naloxone>. Accessed July 2015