



## Dental + Medical Provider Toolkit — Newsletter Article

### 5 Steps for Preventing Opioid Misuse

Did you know opioids are now one of the leading causes of injury-related deaths in Washington State?<sup>1</sup> It's true — more people die from overdose than from car crashes.<sup>1</sup> As health providers, we want our patients to know the potential dangers of prescription opioids and ways to keep your loved ones safe and healthy. Here are some simple steps you can take to prevent opioid misuse:

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#### 1. Recognize an opioid when you see it.

Not sure what an opioid is? You aren't alone. Opioids are a class of drugs commonly used to reduce pain. This includes legal prescription pain relievers such as oxycodone (OxyContin<sup>®</sup>), hydrocodone (Vicodin<sup>®</sup>), codeine and morphine.<sup>2</sup> Heroin, a commonly known illegal drug, is also considered an opioid.

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#### 2. Understand the risks.

Opioid pain relievers are generally safe when taken for a short time and as prescribed. The powerful drug can negatively affect the reward center in the brain, leading a user to need more and more over time. This makes opioids highly addictive.<sup>3</sup>

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#### 3. Ask about your options.

Sometimes an opioid is prescribed after surgery or injury. If you are prescribed an opioid, ask questions. Depending on your level of pain, there could be a better, safer option for reducing and managing your pain. Together, we can find a way to reduce your pain in the healthiest way possible.

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#### 4. Don't share your medications.

75 percent of opioid misuse starts with people using medication that wasn't prescribed for them.<sup>4</sup> Never share an opioid prescription, lock up medications and safely dispose of unused pills at a take-back program near you. Find one at [MED-project.org](http://MED-project.org).<sup>5</sup>

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#### 5. Get help.

Treatment works. If a loved one is struggling with opioid misuse, encourage them to see a doctor for evaluation or to call the Washington Recovery Help Line at 1 (866) 789-1511 or visit [www.warecoveryhelpline.org/](http://www.warecoveryhelpline.org/).

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This is a statewide epidemic, but we can all play a role in preventing opioid misuse. For more information, visit [GetTheFactsRx.com](http://GetTheFactsRx.com).

<sup>1</sup> Washington State Department of Health

<sup>2</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse

<sup>3</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens

<sup>4</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<sup>5</sup> We recommend accessing this URL using a newer web browser such as Chrome or Firefox