



Opioids and Pain Management

Everybody experiences pain differently.
A range of strategies may be needed to manage your pain.

THE NEED TO MANAGE PAIN

Pain that is not managed can negatively impact all aspects of a person's quality of life. It can cause emotional distress, interfere with daily functioning and impact social and family relationships.

Prescription opioids are one of many strategies that a healthcare provider can use to help manage short-term pain, pain following surgery or injury, pain from a health condition or pain at the end of life.

Prescription opioids, as with other pain medications, are typically more effective when used as part of an overall pain management strategy that incorporates other approaches such as physical or psychological therapies.

1 in 5

Canadians live with chronic pain.¹



STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING PAIN WITHOUT MEDICATION

- Peer support
- Exercise
- Physical therapy and massages
- Mindfulness based interventions
- Psychological therapy
- Medical devices to manage pain

To learn more about these strategies, visit

cadth.ca



1 in 8

Canadians is prescribed opioids.²



RISK OF OPIOID TOLERANCE AND DEPENDENCE

Prescription opioids can be effective for managing pain when appropriately prescribed and taken as directed. However, like all medications, opioids also come with risks.

Using opioids may not relieve all pain and continuous use of opioids could result in tolerance that may require higher or more frequent doses to feel the same pain relief. This pattern of use can lead your body to become dependent on opioids and can develop into an opioid use disorder.

Some people have a higher risk of developing physical dependence or opioid use disorder due to factors such as genetic profile and experiences of trauma.



Mixing alcohol or other prescription and non-prescription drugs with opioids can increase the risk of negative side effects, including accidental overdose.



An **overdose** can happen when you take more drugs than your body can handle, which can lead to difficulty breathing and unconsciousness. It can even be fatal.

HAVE YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER BEEN PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS?

- Notify your healthcare provider of any prescription and non-prescription drugs you are taking to understand their interaction with opioids.
- Consult your healthcare provider before making any changes to the dosage of your medication.
- Get a free naloxone kit from the pharmacy. [Naloxone](#) is a medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

Learn more at ccsa.ca/opioids and check out our resources:

- [What Are Opioids?](#)
- [Canada's Opioid Crisis: What You Should Know](#)
- [Canada's Opioid Crisis: How You Can Help](#)
- [Substance Use and the Workplace: Supporting Employers and Employees in the Trades \(toolkit\)](#)

¹ Government of Canada. (2019). *Canadian Pain Task Force Report: June 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/about-health-canada/public-engagement/external-advisory-bodies/canadian-pain-task-force/report-2019.html#a1>

² Canadian Institute for Health Information. *Opioid Prescribing in Canada: How Are Practices Changing?*. Retrieved from <https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/opioid-prescribing-canada-trends-en-web.pdf>

