



What to ask your doctor before taking opioids

Opioids are commonly prescribed to help relieve moderate to severe pain. They're effective when used appropriately and safely, but are often abused because they're so addictive.

Here are some questions from Regence Behavioral Health Medical Director Dr. Jim Polo that can help you talk to your doctor about whether opioids are the right treatment for you.

Questions to ask before you get an opioid prescription:

1. Why do I need this medication? Is it right for me?
2. What are the risks of taking prescription opioids for chronic pain?
3. How long should I take this medication?
4. Are there non-opioid alternatives that could help with pain relief?
5. What if I have a personal or family history of addiction to tobacco, alcohol or drugs?

Additional questions if an opioid is still recommended:

1. What are the potential side effects, and how do I reduce my risk?
2. Will opioids interact with my other medications, especially those for anxiety, sleeping problems or seizures?
3. How should I store my opioid medication—or dispose of unused medication—to prevent others from taking it?
4. How should I plan to taper off this medication?
5. What is naloxone? Do I need a prescription for it, too?