

# ANSWERING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR OXYCONTIN PRESCRIPTION

Your doctor has prescribed the opioid analgesic OxyContin (controlled release oxycodone) to help control your pain. To answer some of the questions you may have about this type of pain reliever, refer to the answers provided on this sheet. Of course, the best possible pain management includes the support of health professionals and family, together with medication, when appropriate. By following your doctor's recommendations, you can achieve the best pain relief for your condition.

***“Patients have the right to the best pain relief possible.”*** Canadian Pain Society

**Telling your doctor when it hurts is more important than you may think. Did you know?**

- *Undertreated pain can lead to more serious complications.*
- *Pain can continue to worsen creating a chronic condition.*
- *By ignoring pain, you ignore its possible long-term effects.*

**Pain is a medical condition that can, and should, be treated.**

## What is an opioid analgesic?

Opioid analgesics are a class of drugs that provide effective pain relief and are available only with a prescription from your doctor. When used properly, this type of analgesic can provide dependable relief to help control your pain. While pain is caused by many different conditions, the pain itself can be treated. To treat pain, oral medication (taken by mouth) is preferred. Some opioid medications provide a short time period of pain relief (up to 4 hours). Pain that lasts longer may be better controlled with opioids that provide longer lasting pain relief. Oral controlled-release opioid analgesics are designed to release the active ingredient in the body slowly, for pain relief lasting up to 12 hours during the day and at night.

## What is OxyContin? How often do I take it?

OxyContin is a controlled-release opioid analgesic that provides oxycodone to relieve your moderate to severe pain. It releases the active ingredient gradually, allowing pain to

be controlled over 12 hours – so it should be taken twice a day or every 12 hours. For example, it can be taken once in the morning at 8 am and then again at 8 pm in the evening. This way, taking your medication will not interfere with your daily activities or your sleep. Each time, it should be taken with 4 to 6 ounces of water. A controlled-release or long-acting opioid formulation like OxyContin is one of the most effective treatments for chronic or continuous pain.

## What is the usual dose of OxyContin?

### Is there a maximum dose?

Your doctor will recommend the dose that is right for you based on controlling your pain with the least side effects and taking into account whether you have been prescribed an opioid previously. Small doses may be needed by some, while others may require more to relieve their pain. Your doctor will begin with a starting dose and then adjust it over time, if required.

If your pain worsens, making you feel uncomfortable, immediately contact your doctor who will decide if it is necessary to adjust your dose.

There is no maximum dose for opioids such as oxycodone, morphine or hydromorphone, but if the dose is increased, it must be done so gradually. OxyContin tablets are available in four strengths: 10 mg (white), 20 mg (pink), 40 mg (yellow), and 80 mg (green). It may be necessary for you to take more than one tablet strength (different coloured tablets) at the same time, in order to receive the total daily dosage prescribed by your doctor. You should not take the 80 mg tablet unless you are already taking the 40 mg tablet, or an equivalent dose of a similar pain medication, and your doctor has instructed you to switch to the 80 mg tablet. Sometimes, if your pain changes or you cannot tolerate the side effects of your opioid medication, you may need to switch to another opioid, but your doctor will decide this.

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### What about side effects?

The most common side effects with opioid analgesics include nausea, constipation, sweating and itchy skin. You can ask your doctor about ways of dealing with constipation, including eating more fibre, drinking more water or taking a laxative or stool softener.

Drowsiness may occur when starting opioid therapy or when the dose is increased. So you should avoid driving a car or operating any kind of vehicle or machinery until the drowsiness disappears.

### Is OxyContin addictive?

When taken properly under your doctor's supervision for pain conditions, opioids, including OxyContin, have a low risk of addiction. Individuals who have abused drugs or have shown addictive behaviour in the past are more likely to develop addiction. Doctors have ways to screen many of these individuals or monitor them under close medical supervision.

The long-term use of opioids may result in physical dependence, which means that if the drug is suddenly discontinued, or the dose reduced, unpleasant sensations called withdrawal symptoms may be experienced, but this is not addiction. To avoid withdrawal symptoms, when opioid therapy is no longer required, the dose should be gradually lowered under a doctor's supervision.

Addiction should not be confused with the withdrawal symptoms that may occur when opioid medication is stopped. Addiction is a very specific problem that can be recognized as drug-seeking behaviour, despite the risks this behaviour creates for the individual and others.

### What can I do to stop abuse of OxyContin or other prescription drugs?

- You can help by storing your medication in a safe place at all times.
- Have your prescription filled at one pharmacy.
- Never give your prescribed pain medication to any other person.
- Never increase the dosage yourself. If your pain increases, tell your doctor.
- Most importantly, be sure to speak to your doctor should you have any other questions, or if your pain worsens.

### What else do I need to know about OxyContin?

**OxyContin tablets should be swallowed whole and should not be broken, chewed or crushed since this can lead to rapid release and absorption of an excessive dose of oxycodone, which can seriously harm you.**

You should tell your doctor about any other medication you are taking, including over-the-counter antihistamines or sleep-aids, as they could affect the way you respond to OxyContin.

**Always speak to your doctor, should your pain worsen, or if you have any questions.**

#### Helpful information sources:

[www.painCare.ca](http://www.painCare.ca)  
[www.purdue.ca](http://www.purdue.ca)

Additional product information available on request.