

Dangers of Opioids

Opioid pain medications can be addictive and, when combined with other medications, may cause severe breathing problems possibly leading to death.

Using opioid medications while having other health conditions may also lead to severe complications. Please speak with your healthcare provider should you have any questions.

For more information on oral health, visit health.maryland.gov/oral-health.

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A photograph of a woman with blonde hair tied back, sitting in a blue dental chair. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile, her hand resting on her cheek. In the foreground, the back of a dentist's head and shoulders are visible, wearing a white lab coat and a blue surgical mask. The background shows a typical dental office setting with white cabinets and equipment.


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DENTAL PAIN MANAGEMENT
Your pain plan starts here.

CONSULT WITH YOUR DENTIST ABOUT YOUR PAIN MANAGEMENT OPTIONS.

YOUR DENTIST CAN EDUCATE YOU ON USE, RISKS, AND ALTERNATIVES.

Preventing Opioid Addiction

Dentists across the country know that patients may experience short-term mild to moderate pain after dental procedures. Over the past several years, more attention has been paid to the potential for opioid addiction. Your dentist wants to be part of the solution. It is important to discuss pain control prior to and after dental procedures with your dentist and their staff.

In the past, opioids such as hydrocodone and oxycodone had been used to lessen short term mild to moderate pain; this practice is no longer the standard of care. Your dentist and other health care providers prefer to use over-the-counter medications as a primary source of pain control.



Opioid Alternatives

Many over-the-counter medications have been proven to be effective in treating pain, especially if taken as directed. These medications are commonly recommended as a first treatment option after any dental procedure:

- NSAID (Ibuprofen, Naproxen)
- Aspirin
- Acetaminophen
- Topical anesthetics such as liquid or gel lidocaine
- Use of warm soothing salt water rinses

Combination therapy or the combined use of Ibuprofen and Tylenol have, in some cases, been proven to be as effective as opioid pain relievers. As little as 600mg of Ibuprofen and 500mg of Tylenol taken together every six hours is proven to provide effective pain control for post-procedural dental pain.

Your dentist may choose to prescribe other non-opioid medications. When prescribed any medication, please follow the directions provided. If the medications recommended for you are causing rash, itching, upset stomach, or are not working properly, please contact your prescribing provider or pharmacist. Your provider may want to see you for a follow up visit should any of the above occur.

Using Opioids Safely

While health care providers and dentists are promoting non-opioid treatments, opioid pain medications may be prescribed in situations where other medications have not proven effective enough.

It is your responsibility to follow all directions provided by your dentist and the pharmacist.

Do not take more than prescribed.

Storing Medications Safely

It is important to store your medications where only you have access to them. Keep them out of reach, hidden, or locked, and keep a count of how many pills you have left.

When your medication is no longer needed, you should safely dispose of the remaining pills by placing them in an unused medication drop box. Avoid flushing unused or expired medications down the drain. You may find a collection program or event by contacting your local police station or by visiting [takebackday.dea.gov](https://www.takebackday.dea.gov).