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## SAFE USE OF OPIOID PAIN MEDICATION

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### Why have I been prescribed an opioid?

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- Relief of severe short-term pain (after surgery, injury, or with cancer)
- Less effective for long-term pain such as fibromyalgia or back pain

### Important safety information

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- May cause drowsiness, constipation, nausea, reduced concentration
- Long-term use can lead to tolerance, dependence, or addiction
- High doses risk overdose and serious breathing problems
- Your prescriber will regularly review your treatment, help balance benefits and risks, and support reducing or stopping opioids if they are no longer helping.

### Safe use tips

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- Take your medicine ***exactly as prescribed***
- Do not drink alcohol or take sedatives unless agreed with your doctor
- Driving: legal if prescribed, but ***never drive if you feel unsafe or drowsy***. You must not drive if your ability is impaired. Check DVLA guidance on driving while taking medicines.
- Store locked and out of children's reach
- To help prevent constipation: drink fluids, keep active, and ask about laxatives if needed

### Review and monitoring

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- Regular reviews (usually every 3 months)
- Check pain relief, side effects, and safety
- Dose may be reduced or changed over time

### Stopping opioids

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- ***Do not stop suddenly*** - withdrawal can occur
- Always agree a gradual taper with your GP or pharmacist

### When to seek help

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- **Contact your GP or pharmacist:** if pain is uncontrolled, side effects troublesome, or you need more tablets than prescribed
- **Call NHS 111:** if you feel very unwell, confused, or increasingly sleepy
- **Call 999:** if you have severe breathing problems, chest pain, or collapse

## Further information

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- NHS: Opioid painkillers  
<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/opioid-painkillers/>
- Pain Toolkit  
<https://www.paintoolkit.org>
- CHG: Pain – Patient Information Leaflet  
<https://cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Pain-CHG.pdf>

## If you have further questions:

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- **Visit:** [www.cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk/contact-us](http://www.cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk/contact-us) and fill out our triage form
- **Call us:** 01285 653198 or 01285 652122
- **Call NHS 111** if you need urgent medical advice (24/7)
- **Call 999** in an emergency

### Routine review

Your GP or pharmacist will check your pain relief, side effects, and dose every 3 months.

### Contact GP or pharmacist

Contact if: pain is uncontrolled, side effects troublesome, or you need more tablets sooner than expected.

### Call 999

Emergency if: severe breathing problems, chest pain, collapse, or extreme sleepiness.

