



Teach solutions

Consider options beyond opioids

You can teach your patients about overcoming pain, addiction and abuse without opioids. There's research on safer pain relief options using non-opioid treatments. Follow these four steps before you prescribe:

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Step 1: Assess pain and function

- Ask your patient questions about their pain.
- Don't prescribe opioids as the first line of treatment.
- Use the pain, enjoyment, general activity (PEG) scale.

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Step 2: Teach patient about non-opioid therapies

- Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAIDs)
- Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs)
- Serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)
- Anticonvulsants
- Exercise and physical therapy



Step 3: Review risks, harm and misuse

- Check patient history and potential risk factors.
- Risks to look for: illegal drug use, prescription drug use, mental health conditions, history of substance use disorder and more.
- Check for concurrent opioid and benzodiazepine use.



Step 4: Talk to your patient about a treatment plan

- Inform them of risk, benefits and side effects.
- Set goals using pain, function and risk based on your earlier assessments.
- Check patient understanding about the treatment plan.

Only prescribe opioids after considering all assessments and non-opioid options. We're counting on you to teach your patients about safe ways to manage opioid prescriptions.



If you prescribe

- Start with immediate-release (IR) opioids at the lowest dose for the shortest therapeutic duration
- Tell patients about safe disposal of unused opioids



Have regular follow-ups

- Check back within one to four weeks after initial pain assessment
- Review current treatment status and assess



Watch for signs of abuse and addiction

- Consider tapering, medication assisted treatment or naloxone

Resources for you

Keep these practices in mind before prescribing opioids. You can review these resources to learn more:

- CDC guideline for prescribing opioids for chronic pain: [cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/guideline.html](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/guideline.html)
- Medication assisted treatment for opioid addiction: <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA09-4443/SMA09-4443.pdf>
- NIDAMED: [drugabuse.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals](https://www.drugabuse.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals)

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