

## **My Child was prescribed an Opioid- What Should I Know?**

### **What is an opioid?**

- Opioids are chemical substances that relieve pain. Prescription opioids are medications that are chemically similar to endorphins which our body makes to relieve pain.
- For most people, when opioids are taken exactly as prescribed, for a short time, they are relatively safe and can reduce pain effectively.
- Dependence, addiction and overdose are potential risks with prescription opioids.
- Prescription medications are some of the most commonly misused drugs by teens, after tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana.

### **How will this medication interact with other medications my child is taking, including recreational drugs or alcohol?**

- Opioids can combine with other drugs and medications (especially alcohol) to cause overdose or even death much quicker than each substance alone. This happens by slowing down the brain and reflexes so much that people stop breathing.
- Medications for anxiety, sleeping problems and seizure are particularly likely to have harmful effects and should be discussed with your doctor.
- Discuss this with your child, and ask your provider in front of your child, or prompt your child to ask the provider themselves when you get a prescription.

### **Are there non-opioid alternatives for pain management?**

- Research shows that ice and a combination of Ibuprofen (Advil) and Acetaminophen (Tylenol) work just as well for minor injuries and teeth extractions as prescription pain medications.
- Some oral surgeons are now using non-opioid alternatives for sedation and post extraction treatment.
- Local hospitals and providers are exploring alternative pain management techniques, ask your provider about these options.

### **Are there alternative non-pharmacological treatments to help with pain?**

- Accept that some pain is ok. Help model strategies to stay calm while experiencing some pain. If your child is experiencing minimal pain following a procedure, they may not need medication.
- Ice or gel packs can help reduce swelling and pain.
- Distraction is effective in managing pain. Listening to music, watching movies, playing video games, reading, or petting or playing with a family pet are all great ways to guide your child's attention away from their pain.
- Model a warm, calm approach to managing pain and the emotions that can arise.

### **What if my teen or a family member has a history of addiction with tobacco, alcohol, or drugs?**

- Teens with a personal or family history of smoking, alcohol or drug abuse may be at a greater risk for misuse or addiction to pain medications.
- Family history of alcohol or drug dependence is a risk factor; research shows that addiction is a product of person's environment, biology, life experience, expectancies of what drinking or using drugs will do, and individual response to drugs and alcohol.
- Talk to your doctor about the best options for your child given their history.

### **How long should my child take this pain medication?**

- Every child and every situation is different.
- Find out when and how to stop using, or taper off your medication.
- Ask that your doctor prescribe the lowest dose and the smallest quantity you may need.
- Following most procedures, your doctor will check in with you to see how well your child's pain is being managed.

### **How do I safely store this medication at home?**

- Never leave a bottle of prescription pain meds at your child's bedside.
- Always lock up medication and make sure a responsible adult is giving your child the correct amount of medication.
- Keep track by making a list that includes the amount and time given. This will help prevent over medicating, misuse and overdose.



- Visit ["Out of Reach - Keep Kids Safe"](#) for more information.

### **What should I do with unused medication?**

- When your child's pain is under control and they no longer need prescription medication, make sure the remainder is disposed of properly.
- Leftover medications can be misused by family members or stolen by someone visiting your home.
- Never flush unused medications down the toilet.
- Safely dispose of your unused medications by mixing them with coffee grounds or kitty litter and throwing them away, or take them to a take-back location or event.

Visit ["Safe Storage and Disposal of Unwanted Medications"](#) for disposal locations in Boulder County.

### **How can I keep my child involved and active while they are recovering?**

- Rest is often recommended to help with healing and recovery time.
- When your child's pain is manageable, get back to a normal routine.
- Depression related to injury is common and can sometimes lead to patients misusing their prescription medications.
- If they can no longer participate in an activity, make sure they are still attending practices, rehearsals, or study sessions. Their coach, trainer or teacher can assist with progressing activity safely or assisting in their physical therapy.
- This may be a time to explore other interests.

### **What if I share the medication?**

- The medication prescribed to your child is for that person only. What is safe for one person might lead to an overdose in another.
- Let your child know that giving, sharing or selling prescription medication can harm others, is illegal and can lead to imprisonment and/or fines.