

Opioid Medication Agreement

An opioid medication has been prescribed for you as part of your pain management therapy for _____ (functional condition or problem)

Name: _____
MRN: _____
Date: _____
Doctor: _____

This agreement will help ensure that:

- You understand the risks and benefits of opioid medications.
- Your treatment plan, including your responsibilities, are clear.
- You and your care team comply with all laws and government requirements regarding the safe, effective and responsible prescribing and use of opioid medication.

Your Kaiser Permanente doctor / health care team's responsibilities are to:

- Involve you in conversations about what treatment options may be best for you, now and in the future, to manage your pain and improve your ability to function.
- Ask you to come in for regular checkups and tests so that we can evaluate how well your opioid medication is working for you. If the medication no longer helps you improve your function or manage your pain, or the side-effects become unmanageable, then your doctor may decide it's time to change the treatment plan. Your doctor will work with you to slowly reduce the dose (or taper it). Together you will discuss which alternative therapies will be best for you to try once you stop using opioid therapy.
- Talk to you about opioid risks, side effects, and benefits. They will also discuss other pain therapy options with you.
- Follow state and federal laws regarding controlled substances such as opioids that attempt to prevent sharing, selling, trading, or other harmful or illegal uses of these medications.
- Refer you to chemical dependency counseling (or substance abuse treatment) or stop opioid therapy if test results show you may be misusing or sharing your medication.
- Request that you complete regular drug screening tests, as needed, to help ensure your safety and avoid dangerous drug interactions.

Your responsibilities are to:

- Read and understand the information on opioid risks, side effects, and benefits that your doctors or your health care team gives you. We encourage you to ask your doctor or pharmacist questions about this information.
- Use your opioid medications only as prescribed and directed. Do not break, chew, crush, dissolve, or inject your medicine. Do not take more medication unless your doctor advises you to.
- Tell your doctor immediately whenever another doctor or dentist has given you any other pain management medications. Inform your doctor about all of the medications, vitamins, and dietary supplements you take.
- Have unannounced urine or blood screening drug tests as required by your doctor. At times, you might also be asked to bring your opioid pills, in their original bottles or containers, with you for counting. We want to make sure you are taking the right amount of this medication for your safety. We provide this care and monitoring to everyone on a long-term trial of opioids.
- Not sell, share, trade or in any way give your medications to others. You also agree not to buy, borrow, take or otherwise accept opioids from family members, friends or others.
- Not use any street or illegal drugs such as marijuana, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, etc. or any other drugs that your doctor tells you should not be taken with opioids.
- Stay safe by not drinking or by limiting use of alcohol while taking opioids. You also agree not to drive or operate machinery when taking opioids until your doctor and you are sure you can do so safely.



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- Comply with your responsibility to report use of medications to your employer or regulatory authority if you work in a safety sensitive job.
- Keep your opioids stored or locked up in a safe, secure place. This can help prevent possible theft. It helps keep children and pets safe as well. Medications that are lost or destroyed will not usually be replaced. Your doctor may ask you for a police report before replacing your medication if it was stolen.
- Fill or refill your prescription for all of your opioid medications only at Kaiser Permanente pharmacies, or indicate below the non-Kaiser Permanente pharmacy you intend to use:
Pharmacy: _____ telephone: _____
- Request refills only from your primary care doctor or the doctor who is treating you. Your doctor will be able to check the California state database and identify any times you get opioid medications from different health care providers, dentists, or pharmacies.
_____ (name of physician) or his/her covering clinician.
- Inform your health care team if you are no longer a member of Kaiser Permanente.
- Safely dispose of your unused opioid medication by returning it to a designated place suggested by the Pharmacy department or by taking it to special waste disposal centers in your city or county.

Patient statement:

I understand the use of opioids is a test or a trial. My provider may stop prescribing this medication for me if I fail to comply with this agreement or if:

- My doctor believes that the risks and harms of opioid use outweigh the benefits they provide.
- I have received or attempted to get opioid medications from other doctors or dentists and did not tell my doctor right away.
- I have major side effects that cannot be adequately managed or show signs of addiction.
- Opioids no longer improve my function, quality of life, or control my pain, or, they make the pain worse for me.
- I need a higher dose of opioids to get the same level of pain control (also known as a “tolerance” to opioids).
- I do not follow my doctor’s instructions for taking the opioids (such as taking extra doses without my doctor’s approval) or I behave in a way that causes my doctor to suspect that I am misusing my medication (such as frequently requesting increases in doses or quantities or seeking early renewals of prescriptions).
- I trade, sell, or otherwise misuse opioids.
- I often miss, am late for, and/or fail to reschedule appointments.
- I fail to follow my doctor’s advice and/or I do not follow the other therapies my doctor has recommended to me as part of my care plan.
- I act in a way that is threatening to staff or other patients. I understand my doctor may report my actions to a local law enforcement agency.



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I have read this agreement, reviewed a copy of **“Safe Use of Opioids: Know the Risks and Side Effects,”** and talked with my doctor about these materials. I understand them, and I was given an opportunity to ask questions about the risks and benefits of long-term use of opioid therapy. We also discussed alternative pain therapy options. I was satisfied with the answers my doctor provided me.

I acknowledge that my doctor may share this agreement and any unexpected findings about my health and use of opioids with any health care providers, pharmacy, legal authority, or regulatory agency. This may include pharmacists or chronic pain, chemical dependency (or substance abuse treatment), and/or psychiatry or behavioral health departments for better coordination of my treatment.

By my signature below, I agree to my responsibilities as outlined in this agreement and I consent to the treatment of my pain with opioid pain medications.

Patient’s Signature _____ Date: _____

Clinician’s Signature _____ Date: _____

What are the goals of opioid treatment?

Opioid medication is meant to:

- Improve your ability to walk, do household chores (such as laundry, cooking), go to work, or engage in social, recreational and other physical activities.
- Reduce the amount of pain you are experiencing.

When taken as prescribed, opioids can be a helpful part of pain management. However, opioids are a risky treatment. Some of the problems related to the use of opioids are:

- Opioids don't work for every person or type of pain.
- While opioids may reduce pain for some people, they will not take it away completely. (Studies show that opioids are likely to cut your pain by only one third.)
- The benefits of taking opioids long term may be very limited.
- Opioids can have significant harmful effects.

Your health care team will taper or discontinue your opioid therapy if you don't benefit from it, or if the harm and/or risks outweigh the benefits. You can still continue to receive pain care through use of other medications or treatments.

There are many treatments that may be more helpful than opioids and can help improve your ability to do daily activities and manage pain. These include daily exercises, physical therapy, healthy eating, weight management, smoking cessation, and counseling for depression, anxiety, or other conditions. Ongoing self-management skills are very effective for chronic pain.

Managing side effects and risks

It is important to report any side effects to your doctor. Tell us if any side effects interfere with your daily activities. This information will help you and your doctor develop a treatment plan that balances potential harms (side effects and risks) and benefits (pain relief and improved ability to function).

Possible side effects include:

- *Sleepiness or "slow thinking":* Opioids can impair your judgment and cause problems with how you make decisions. Sleepiness may lessen over time.
- *Mental confusion, bad dreams or hallucinations:* Your doctor may need to change your dose or medicine to treat these side effects.
- *Constipation:* This is a common side effect that may not go away. Your doctor may prescribe laxatives to improve your bowel movements. Regular physical activity, a diet high in fiber, and drinking more water may also help.
- *Itching:* Itching is rare. It usually occurs early in treatment. Your doctor may need to change your opioids and order medicine to treat itching.
- *Sweating:* Wearing light clothes or layers you can remove may help decrease sweating.
- *Nausea and vomiting:* This can occur early or late in treatment and usually goes away with time. Your provider may prescribe medication to help control nausea.

Other risks from opioids

While opioids can provide benefits, they can also cause:

- **Respiratory depression:** Breathing which is severely slowed or stopped. This can be life threatening.
- **Tolerance:** With long-term opioid therapy, you may need more medicine to get the same amount of pain relief, which may increase the likelihood of many of the other side effects and risks. The current medical standard of care is to limit doses of opioids. This means that many patients who develop tolerance may be asked to taper off of opioids if they no longer reduce pain.
- **Withdrawal symptoms (physical dependence):** When you use opioid therapy for even a few months, your body, nervous system, and brain will get used to or begin to rely on opioid medication. You may suffer withdrawal symptoms if you suddenly stop taking opioids, taper them too quickly, or take a drug that blocks the effects of the opioids. People who take opioids for a prolonged period of time become physically dependent on them. Physical dependence is NOT the same as addiction, but it is a significant problem that needs to be managed.
- **Harm to your health from misuse:** Misuse can mean that you do not follow your doctor's instructions for taking the opioids. For example, you may start taking extra doses without your doctor's approval or saving up doses for later use. Some signs that people might be misusing their medication are requesting increases in doses or quantities or seeking early renewals of prescriptions. To avoid any misunderstanding with your physician:
 - Take your medication only as prescribed.

- Be sure to tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and dietary supplements.
- Do not break, chew, crush, dissolve, or inject your opioid medicine. If you cannot swallow your medicine whole, talk to your doctor.
- **Abuse:** Opioid abuse is a serious problem in our society. A significant number of people taking opioids end up abusing the drug or becoming addicted, leading to accidental deaths from overdose.
 - If you have a history of alcohol or drug misuse or addiction, talk to your doctor about this. Treatment with opioids for pain may increase the possibility of a relapse.
 - A history of addiction may not disqualify you for opioid treatment of pain. However, starting or continuing a program for recovery may be recommended as part of your treatment program.
- **Overdose and death:** Mixing some opioids with alcohol or other drugs may cause unpredictable side effects which can put your health and life in danger. Call 911 right away if:
 - You take too much opioid medicine
 - You have trouble breathing, or severe shortness of breath
 - A child has taken this medicine
- **Sleep apnea or sleep disturbance:** Sleep apnea is abnormal breathing pauses during sleep. This is a serious risk. Patients using opioids may also experience sleep problems.
- **Worsening of pain:** For some people, opioids may actually make pain worse.
- **Impaired driving:**
 - Opioids may affect your ability to drive a car or use other machinery safely.
 - Avoid driving a motor vehicle or operating dangerous machinery if you feel sleepy or confused after taking any medication.
- **Decreased hormones:** Opioid use may effect sex hormone levels and decrease sexual arousal and your desire to have sex. People with decreased sex hormones may experience depression, anxiety, tiredness, hot flashes and night sweats. It can also cause loss of muscle mass, weakness, brittle bones (osteoporosis) and bone fractures.
 - For men, opioids may decrease the ability to have an erection.
 - Women who use opioids may have irregular or no menstrual periods. So it's important that women use effective birth control methods to prevent pregnancy during opioid treatment. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. Opioids may harm your baby if taken while pregnant.
- Regular physical activity for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Other types of pain medications.
- Chronic Pain Management classes.
- Physical therapy.
- Mind-body exercises such as Tai Chi, yoga, or meditation.

Other resources

From your physician's home page at kp.org/mydoctor you can find more information about the kinds of classes or online education we have available:

- Check out a guide to our online pain relief programs at <http://kpdoc.org/painrelief>
- Learn more about mind body medicine at <http://kpdoc.org/mindbodyhealth>
- Find a Pathways to Emotional Health class near you at <http://kpdoc.org/healthtoolsand-classes>
- Browse through our Staying Healthy topics to learn how to manage your weight, reduce stress, overcome sleep problems, or quit smoking. Go to <http://kpdoc.org/stayinghealthy>
- Try a free session with a Wellness Coach by telephone. Go to kp.org/mydoctor/wellnesscoaching

Pain relief resources at Kaiser Permanente

Your doctor may have other recommendations for you in addition to opioid therapy to treat your pain. These may include:

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.

If you have an emergency medical condition, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital.

An emergency medical condition is any of the following: (1) a medical condition that manifests itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity (including severe pain) such that you could reasonably expect the absence of immediate medical attention to result in serious jeopardy to your health or body functions or organs; (2) active labor when there isn't enough time for safe transfer to a Plan hospital (or designated hospital) before delivery, or if transfer poses a threat to your (or your unborn child's) health and safety, or (3) a mental disorder that manifests itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity such that either you are an immediate danger to yourself or others, or you are not immediately able to provide for, or use, food, shelter, or clothing, due to the mental disorder.