



## Information Leaflet - Ten opioid safety messages

Opioids are very strong painkillers usually intended to provide pain relief in the *short term* or at *end of life*.

### 1. Ensure you know:

- Why** the opioid medicine has been prescribed for you
- How long** you are expected to use the opioid medicine for
- How long** the opioid medicine will take to work
- What **goals** you have for your treatment and how you can use these to determine whether the opioid is appropriate for you
- How to use** the opioid medicine if sustained-release (works over time) and immediate-release (works straight away) formulations have been prescribed together.
- How and when** your treatment will be reviewed and monitored
- What the potential side effects are
- The risks** of developing dependence and the risk of developing tolerance
- The date** of your next review
- Who** your designated prescriber is
- Who** you should contact if you have any problems with your opioid treatment

**2. Learn about opioids and their short and long term risks.** You can do this by reading the following leaflet 'Taking Opioids for Pain' at <https://fpm.ac.uk/sites/fpm/files/documents/2019-09/FPM-OA-taking-opioids.pdf> or you can request a paper copy.

**3.** Always read the manufacturer's patient information leaflet.

**4.** Be aware that opioids, pain and tiredness **may affect your ability to drive**. Seek advice from the person who prescribes your medicines, or your local pharmacist, about driving safely and ensure you are familiar with the UK law <https://www.fpm.ac.uk/sites/fpm/files/documents/2019-08/FPM-Driving-and-Pain-patientinformation.pdf>

**5.** Always take prescribed opioids as instructed - **never take more than you have been prescribed**.

**6.** Do not take opioids to help you fall asleep or manage anxiety or distress.

**7.** Understand the risks of taking opioids with sedatives, anti-anxiety medications, pregabalin, gabapentin and alcohol. <https://fpm.ac.uk/about-pain-medicine-patients-relatives/patientinformation-leaflets>

**8.** Your prescribed opioid medicine must only be used by you - **never share or sell your prescription opioids with others**.

**9.** Always keep prescriptions and medicines safe to minimise the risk of other people having access to them. Look at ways to lock them away. Consider a lockable storage box.

**10.** Always follow manufacturer's recommendations on storage and safe disposal to reduce the risk of access to children, pets or anyone who might misuse them. Any medicine that is no longer required or is out-of-date must be returned to your local pharmacy for safe disposal.