

One of Dane County's biggest opioid problems is in our medicine cabinets.



IN 2018, THERE WERE ALMOST 241,000 OPIOID PRESCRIPTIONS DISPENSED IN DANE COUNTY¹.

If these medications are not safely used, stored, and disposed of they can cause problems for you or a loved one. There were nearly 500 unintentional opioid overdose deaths in Dane County from 2010 to 2017... over half of these deaths were from misuse of prescription opioids², also called prescription pain relievers. Approximately 50% of those who misuse prescription pain relievers (opioids) get them from friends or family³.

PLEASE...

- Don't share your prescription opioids with others.
- Don't take someone else's prescription medication.
- Store your prescription pain relievers and other medications securely.
- Safely dispose of expired, unused, or unwanted prescription medications.

Safe Communities Madison-Dane County can provide you with a lockbox to securely store medications. We also have information on where and how to safely dispose of expired or unused medication.



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safercommunity.net/meddrop/

SOURCES

¹Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services, Wisconsin ePDMP (4/2/19) ²Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics. WISH data query system, Drug Overdose Deaths Module (3/15/19) ³Lipari, R.N. and Hughes, A. How people obtain the prescription pain relievers they misuse. CBHSQ Report (1/12/17).

Breaking the Myths



MYTH #1: Since prescription opioids are created and tested in a scientific environment they are safer to use than street drugs.

REALITY: When misused or taken without a health care professional's prescription, these drugs can be just as harmful as illegal street drugs. Taking these medications together with alcohol or other drugs can have serious and possibly deadly consequences.

MYTH #2: Borrowing / trading prescription opioids is safe and legal.

REALITY: Opioid medications are controlled substances that carry legal penalties for misuse, buying, and selling. Overdose is also possible for those exchanging medications of varying strengths. Not all of these medications are equal in terms of strength and dosing. You may be used to taking one opioid and your friend may be used to taking another, but exchanging medication is not a safe idea.

MYTH #3: Because the opioids are prescription medications, you can't become dependent on them.

REALITY: Prescription opioids can lead to physical dependency and addiction.

MYTH #4: There are not withdrawal symptoms if you stop using prescription opioids.

REALITY: Withdrawal symptoms may be experienced after minimal use of opioids, and prolonged use can cause severe withdrawal symptoms.

SOURCE

National Council on Patient Information and Education BeMedWise Program

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The Truth About Prescription Opioids (pain relievers)

Prescription opioids are easy to misuse

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS? Prescription opioids are a category of commonly prescribed pain relievers. Health care professionals prescribe them, typically in pill form, to help patients with severe or chronic pain. When they're taken as directed by a health care professional, they're relatively safe and can be beneficial. But there is always a risk of addiction, and that risk increases greatly when you misuse prescription opioids.

WHAT IS PRESCRIPTION OPIOID MISUSE?

- Taking prescription opioids in a way that was not prescribed, such as taking too many pills at one time, combining pills with alcohol or other drugs, or crushing pills into powder to snort or inject them.
- Taking someone else's prescription opioid, even if you're doing so for the medication's intended purpose, to ease pain.
- Taking prescription opioids for the sole purpose of feeling good or getting high.
- When taken without a health care professional's direction and oversight, prescription opioid medications can cause serious adverse consequences and can lead to a substance use disorder, overdose, or death.

Using prescription opioids safely

- Make sure you're getting care that is safe, effective, and right for you. Talk with your health care professional about setting goals for managing your pain.
- Talk with your health care professional to fully understand benefits and risks of prescription opioids before taking them.
- Ask your health care professional about non-opioid options for treating pain, including medications other than opioids as well as options other than medication, like exercise.
- Read your prescription label. If you have any questions ask the pharmacist while you're there.
- Avoid taking opioids with alcohol and other substances or medications. It is very dangerous to combine opioids with other drugs, especially those that cause drowsiness.
- Let your health care professional know about any side effects or other concerns you may have about your prescription.
- Do not share your prescription pain relievers or other medications with anyone.
- Do not take someone else's prescription medication.
- Never take opioids in greater amounts or more often than prescribed.

Sharing isn't caring

SHARING ISN'T CARING: Sharing opioid prescriptions with family or friends, even when you intend to help them, is a dangerous misuse that could cause serious consequences. Here are some of the reasons why sharing medicine has dangerous consequences:

DIFFERENT DOSES: Drugs are prescribed in different dosages with different instructions based on the individual. So even if a person has a prescription for the drug you planned to share with them, their health care professional may have them on a different dose or medication schedule.

SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS: All medications have side effects, which health care professionals take into consideration when they choose a certain medicine for their patient. Medications will have different results for each individual, based on their health needs and how they interact (potentially badly) with other medicines.

DRUG SAFETY: The medications dispensed by licensed pharmacies are subject to strict regulations for quality and safety. Unfortunately, fake or counterfeit medicine sold on the streets and online is a problem. When you take medicine from someone else, you can't always confirm its safety or ingredients.

Some individuals are more prone to developing substance use disorders; misusing opioid medications may be especially dangerous for these individuals.

The bottom line is, medicine should only be taken by the person it is prescribed for AND as directed by the health care provider.

