



Wellness

# Combating the opioid crisis

Share your medical history with your dentist if you have a situation that requires prescription opioids for pain relief.

If you have a dental emergency or any kind of oral surgery, your dentist may prescribe medicine to help manage pain.

But today, misuse of certain types of prescription painkillers known as opioids — including hydrocodone, oxycodone, morphine and codeine — is a national public health crisis. Taking opioids in a way other than prescribed can lead to addiction, overdose or even death. Each day, more than 130 Americans die from an opioid overdose.<sup>1</sup>

The dental community — working hand in hand with medical, law enforcement and education communities — is helping combat this problem to prevent opioid misuse.

<sup>1</sup>National Institute on Drug Abuse

### How to do your part

- **Ask your dentist about over-the-counter medications** such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen to see if they could be just as effective for managing your pain.
- **Confirm the number of days you should take the painkillers.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends taking prescription opioids for no more than seven days, and in most cases, no more than three days.
- **Make sure opioids are never prescribed to your small children.**
- **Know that painkillers may be addictive** and talk through this with your dentist.
- **Be aware of what to do with unused or expired pills.** Your dentist or pharmacist can provide guidance on how to properly dispose of them.

**Let your dentist know what other medications you are taking and if your family has a history of addiction. Ask questions. And properly dispose of any leftover pills as soon as possible.**



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