

Let's Talk About...

Opioid taper at home

Opioids are strong medicines that treat pain and discomfort. Unfortunately, they can also come with some heavy dependencies. The best way to remove your child from their pain medicine is by doing an opioid taper. This is a slow reduction in your child's medicine that can be given by mouth or in an IV (small tube placed into a vein).

What is an opioid taper?

During an opioid taper, you slowly reduce your child's opioid dose and sometimes increase the time between doses. A taper prevents the pain and discomfort of withdrawal.

Your child can have an opioid withdrawal when they use opioids regularly for 5 days and stop taking the medicine abruptly.

Why does my child need an opioid taper?

While your child was in the hospital, they needed certain medicines to treat or prevent pain. Your child may need an opioid taper. An opioid taper will prevent pain, irritation, and distress that can occur from stopping this medicine too quickly.

How long will my child be on an opioid taper?

Your child's opioid taper may be as short as a few days or last as long as 2–3 weeks. Your child's healthcare provider will make sure your child has a safe and effective opioid taper. They can tell you how long you can expect your child's taper to last.

How do I keep my child safe while on an opioid taper?

Your child's doctor will provide safe and effective doses of opioids to your child. The following will help prevent problems while your child is on an opioid taper:

- Give your child the medicine exactly as the healthcare provider prescribed.
- Do not share the medicine with anyone else.
- Do not change the amount of medicine your child gets unless you have specific instructions from your child's healthcare provider.
- Do not change the times your child gets the medicine unless you have specific instructions from your child's healthcare provider.
- If your child has any symptoms of withdrawal or overdose (see below), tell your child's healthcare provider immediately. Sometimes opioid tapers need to be adjusted.

What are the signs of opioid withdrawal?

Signs of opioid withdrawal include:

- Sneezing
- Sweating
- Seizures
- Yawning
- Fever
- Fussiness
- Diarrhea
- Increased muscle tone
- Shaking

If your child has these symptoms, call their healthcare provider. They can decide if your child has an infection or withdrawal that may need to be treated.



