

TAKING OPIOIDS FOR PAIN?

Some Hard Questions You Should Ask

More than 300 million opioid prescriptions are written annually—often for postoperative pain or chronic pain in the back or legs. Opioids can help ease moderate and severe short-term pain. But long term they come with big risks, such as addiction and overdose, and they can negatively impact quality of life.

The [American Society of Anesthesiologists](https://www.asahq.org) suggests you ask yourself and your physician some tough questions.

WHY WAS I PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS?

- Were opioids prescribed to me automatically?
- Are there other effective pain management options?
- If opioids are the best option to treat my moderate to severe pain, how long should I take them?



ARE OPIOIDS AFFECTING MY QUALITY OF LIFE?

Am I suffering from common opioid side effects, such as severe constipation, mental fogginess, nausea, or depression?



WHAT ARE MY CONCERNS ABOUT TAKING OPIOIDS—OR STOPPING THEM?

- Will people judge me because I'm taking opioids?
- Can I become addicted or even overdose? (Ask your physician about naloxone, which reverses the effects of an overdose.)
- Will I be able to manage my pain if I stop taking opioids?



ARE THERE OTHER PAIN MANAGEMENT OPTIONS?

Could I be helped by alternative treatments such as:

- Injections or nerve blocks
- Electrical stimulation or spinal cord stimulation
- Physical therapy, ultrasound, or massage
- Acupuncture
- Biofeedback, meditation, deep breathing, or relaxation
- Surgical procedures



WHAT TYPE OF PHYSICIAN CAN BEST HELP ME MANAGE MY PAIN?

Could a physician who specializes in pain best help me? (These specialists have four years of medical school and additional specialty training, such as anesthesiology, followed by another year of training to become an expert in treating pain.)



For more information about physician anesthesiologists, including those who manage pain, visit [asahq.org/madeforthismoment](https://www.asahq.org/madeforthismoment).