

# Short and Long-Term Side Effects of Opioids

Opioids (like oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, fentanyl) are strong pain medicines. While they can help in the short term, they also carry risks and side effects.

## Short-Term Side Effects

- Drowsiness or feeling sedated
- Constipation
- Nausea or vomiting
- Itching or sweating
- Slowed breathing
- Trouble thinking clearly or feeling 'foggy'
- Dizziness or feeling faint

## Long-Term Side Effects

- Tolerance (needing more medicine for the same effect)
- Physical dependence (withdrawal symptoms if you stop suddenly)
- Addiction (loss of control over use)
- Increased sensitivity to pain (opioid-induced hyperalgesia)
- Hormone changes (low testosterone, irregular periods)
- Weakened immune system
- Depression, mood swings, or sleep problems
- Higher risk of overdose, especially at higher doses

## Why This Matters

Understanding side effects helps you make safer choices and know what to look out for. Talk to your doctor if you notice these effects. Never stop opioids suddenly without guidance.

## Goal

Opioids should be used at the lowest effective dose, for the shortest necessary time. Safer pain management often combines medicines, therapies, and lifestyle strategies.