



# Is My Pain Medication Making Me Worse?

## Jim's Experience

Jim, a 55-year-old construction worker, had low back surgery to treat a work-related injury. When his back pain continued, his doctor prescribed increased amounts of a powerful opioid pain killer.

Several weeks later, Jim tried to cut back on his medication, but the pain was unbearable. Jim was convinced that he could not live without the medication. He started to feel more fatigued, dizzy and withdrawn. He slept poorly and stayed in bed or watched TV all day. Jim became depressed.

Jim's family thought he was getting worse, not better. They wanted their loving, funny and kind Jim back. His family knew their loved one needed help, but what could they do?

**Do you or a loved one have a similar story?  
It may be time to ask for help.**



Help is available at **877-8-HOPENY** or **877-846-7369**

## Why isn't my pain medication making me feel better?

Continued use of opioid pain medications:

- Causes changes to your brain.
- May require higher dosages of medication to have the same level of pain relief (also called tolerance).
- Can make you more sensitive to pain and may make your pain worse.

## What are opioids?

Opioids are prescription pain medications that affect the brain and are highly addictive.

### Commonly prescribed opioid pain medications include:

Actiq, Duragesic, Fentora (Fentanyl)

Avinza, MS Contin (Morphine)

Codeine

Dilaudid, Exalgo (Hydromorphone)

Lortab, Norco, Vicodin (Hydrocodone and acetaminophen)

Nucynta (Tapentadol)

Opana (Oxymorphone)

OxyContin (Oxycodone)

Percocet (Oxycodone and acetaminophen)

## What side effects or consequences could I have from taking opioids?

### Common side effects of opioid use:

Drowsiness, severe sedation and dizziness

Nausea, vomiting and constipation

Confusion, memory loss

Changes in mood, behavior and withdrawal from loved ones

Decreased ability to function

Uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms when opioids are stopped suddenly (also called dependence)

Uncontrollable cravings for opioids and drug use leading to behaviors harmful to oneself or others (also called addiction)

Difficulty breathing, overdose and death



## How can I tell if my use of pain medication is causing me harm?

Answer the following questions to help you find out:

- Do you think a lot about taking your pain medication?
- Do you need higher doses of your medication to control your pain?
- Does your pain seem to get worse as the dose of your pain medication goes up?
- Does the thought of running out of pain medication really scare you?
- Have you ever tried to stop or cut down on your pain medication but were not able to?
- Has using prescription pain medication hurt your relationships with other people?
- Are your friends or loved ones concerned about your pain medication use?

**If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions, it may be time to ask for help.**

## Where can I get help?

- You and/or your family may first want to discuss your concerns with your physician. Your doctor may be able to guide you to the right specialist.
- You can call or text the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) HOPELine. All calls are toll-free, anonymous and confidential: **877-8-HOPENY** or **877-846-7369**. Help is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- For more information, visit the OASAS website at [oasas.ny.gov/treatment](https://oasas.ny.gov/treatment)

## Will workers’ compensation insurance pay for my treatment?

Yes, if treatment is either recommended by a Judge or approved by your workers’ compensation insurance carrier.

## If I seek treatment, will I need to stop all opioids?

Not necessarily. Each case is individually reviewed by specialists.

## What other treatments are available to help me?

A specialist can identify and treat other conditions contributing to your pain, recommend other approaches that will improve your health and, if indicated, consider the use of non-opioid medications.

## What does ongoing treatment for opioid dependence or addiction usually include?

- Ongoing treatment begins with an evaluation by an addiction treatment professional.
- You may need specialized medical care in an addiction treatment program. Treatment can involve a gradual reduction of the pain medication.
- Treatment can include both behavioral therapy and medication.
- Comprehensive programs provide a combination of other services uniquely matched to your needs.

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For more information visit, [oasas.ny.gov/treatment](https://oasas.ny.gov/treatment)**