

A guide to oxycodone

Oxycodone is used for moderate to severe pain

Brand names for oxycodone:

Short acting

Oxynorm® liquid
Oxynorm® capsules
Endone® tablets

Long acting

Oxycontin® tablets

How to take oral oxycodone (oxycodone taken by mouth)

- **Short acting oxycodone** (Oxynorm®, Endone®) is taken as needed, starts to work after about 30 minutes and works for up to 4 hours.
- **Long acting oxycodone** (Oxycontin®) is taken regularly to control on-going pain (constant and continual pain.)
Long acting oxycodone is taken every 12 hours to control pain. Take your morning dose when you wake up and then the evening dose about 12 hours later.
- Long acting oxycodone (Oxycontin®) must be swallowed whole – **do not crush or chew**.
- Most patients will be ordered a long acting oxycodone and a short acting oxycodone. The long acting oxycodone is taken to control ongoing pain, and the short acting oxycodone is taken for breakthrough pain, that is, pain which occurs between the regular doses of long acting oxycodone.
Always take the long acting oxycodone regularly, and take short acting oxycodone as well if you need to.
Wait about 30 to 60 minutes after taking the dose of short acting oxycodone. If you still have pain, take a second dose.
- If you need more than 2 to 3 extra doses of short acting oxycodone in a day, tell your health professional (eg, doctor, nurse, pharmacist), as the dose of long acting oxycodone may need reviewing.
- Some people find that things like walking or showering brings on pain. Tell your health professional, who can advise you on the best way to manage this.
- If you forget to take your long acting oxycodone, take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your

regular schedule. Do not take a double dose. Remember that you can take a dose of the quick acting oxycodone if you have pain.

- If you vomit and bring up your long acting oxycodone, repeat the dose as soon as you feel better. If you are unsure, contact your health professional.

Oxycodone and addiction

- You will not become addicted to oxycodone if you are taking it at the appropriate dose for your pain. If you are having had other treatments for pain, such as radiotherapy, it may be possible to reduce the dose of oxycodone. Do not stop taking oxycodone suddenly, or you may get withdrawal symptoms such as chills, stomach pains or diarrhoea.
- The amount of oxycodone needed for pain varies from patient to patient. People often stay on the same dose of oxycodone for a long time. Others find that their oxycodone dose needs to be adjusted. If your oxycodone dose needs to be increased it does not necessarily mean that your disease is worse.

Common side effects of oxycodone

- Drowsiness/sleepiness - This is most common when you first take oxycodone or when the dose is increased. It should improve after a few days.
- Constipation – This is a common side effect but is preventable if you always take a laxative regularly as prescribed by your doctor. It is important to drink plenty of fluids.
- Nausea - If you feel nauseated when you first start to take oxycodone, try taking it with food. Your doctor may need to give you some medicine for a few days until nausea goes away.

Some medicines, such as sedatives and ant-depressants, or alcohol may increase the side-effects of oxycodone. Ask your health professional for advice.

Oxycodone and driving

Oxycodone may impair your ability to drive. Generally, avoid driving when starting oxycodone, and when increasing the dose. Check with your health professional if you are unsure.

Although oxycodone is a very good pain killer, it is not helpful for all types of pain. Other treatments may be needed, and can be prescribed by your doctor if oxycodone is not controlling your pain, or is causing unpleasant side effects.

The information provided in this leaflet is a guide only and it is important to ask your health professional if you have questions or concerns about the use of oxycodone.

Developing the role of a pharmacist in community palliative care multidisciplinary teams project.

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