

# Prescription Opioids: Patient Education Can Save Lives

ALLIED AGAINST  
Opioid Abuse



PA FOUNDATION

**Pledge to pause before you prescribe and talk to your patients about the rights, risks and responsibilities associated with prescription opioids.**

As the country looks to reverse the harmful trend of opioid addiction, the importance of engaging patients, raising awareness about the risks of opioid abuse, and educating about safe use is critical. The PA Foundation is a partner of Allied Against Opioid Abuse (AAOA), a national education and awareness initiative to help prevent the abuse and misuse of prescription opioids.

## Key Issues of Concern

- 1 **Approximately 40%** of those who misused prescription pain relievers in the past year said they **obtained the medicine from a friend or relative for free.**<sup>1</sup>
- 2 A recent study found that **more than two-thirds of patients** who undergo surgery **do not use all of their painkillers**, and few safely store or dispose of these medications.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 As many as **one in four patients** who receive prescription opioids for long-term pain through primary care settings **struggle with addiction.**<sup>3</sup>

## Don't Dash...Discuss!

**Talk with your patients about addiction risks and ask about any personal or family history of addiction.**

- Consider alternative treatment if there is a past history of addiction.
- Educate about partial fill at the pharmacy as a strategy to limit quantities on hand.

## Review safe use and storage of the prescription.

- Never share prescriptions.
- Follow the instructions provided.
- Store all opioids in their original packaging and retain the prescription package information, directions for use and expiration date.
- Keep opioids out of reach of children and in a locked cabinet or lockbox away from family members and house guests.
- Remind patients who wear a fentanyl patch to cover it with adhesive film to make sure it does not fall off and regularly check to make sure it is still in place.
- Urge patients to monitor the medicine they take and how much remains after each dose so they know if there is any missing medicine.

## Discuss what to do with leftover medication.

- Remind patients to dispose of leftover opioid medication:
  - Refer to the product packaging for disposal instructions.
  - Share local disposal guidelines.
  - Provide information on local drug take back programs.

<sup>1</sup> 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA: [www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR2-2015/NSDUH-FFR2-2015.html](http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR2-2015/NSDUH-FFR2-2015.html)

<sup>2</sup> JAMA Surgery: [www.jamanetwork.com/journals/jamasurgery/article-abstract/2644905](http://www.jamanetwork.com/journals/jamasurgery/article-abstract/2644905)

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/overdose.html](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/overdose.html)

## Take the Pledge: Pause Before You Prescribe

As a future PA and prescriber, I pledge to pause to talk to my patients and their caregivers about the treatment options available for pain, and risks associated with prescription opioids, as well as their responsibility to safely store and appropriately dispose of leftover medications.

I will help combat the opioid epidemic by engaging my patients to make sure they understand their rights, risks and responsibilities associated with prescription opioids.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to the AAOA resource table and receive your **FREE 8GB flash drive with educational resources** to share with your future patients.