

CDC OFFERS TOOLS TO PREVENT PRESCRIPTION OPIOID ABUSE AND OVERDOSE

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released a brochure for pharmacists with tips on collaborating with prescribers and communicating effectively with patients to prevent prescription opioid abuse and overdose.

The brochure "[Pharmacists: On the Front Lines](#)" notes that sales of prescription opioids in the United States nearly quadrupled from 1999 to 2014 – but the amount of pain reported by patients remained unchanged.

The CDC publication notes that pharmacists and prescribers share a common goal of ensuring safe and effective treatment for patients. The CDC urges pharmacists and prescribers to work collaboratively to optimize pain management while preventing opioid abuse and overdose.

The brochure also encourages pharmacists to educate patients receiving opioid prescriptions about proper use, side effects, medication fills, stockpiling medication, and safe storage and disposal. Besides tips on how to communicate with patients – including asking open-ended questions and being empathetic – the CDC offers specific questions pharmacists can ask patients to start the conversation. Suggestions include:

- What medications have you taken to manage pain and how did you respond?
- How well is your medication controlling your pain?
- In addition to medications, what other ways are you managing your pain?
- Do you know what medications you should avoid while taking opioids?

The CDC also has released a [pocket guide for prescribers on tapering opioids](#). Besides advice on when to consider reducing or tapering and discontinuing opioid therapy, the guide provides general suggestions for physicians on how to develop individualized plans for patients that minimize withdrawal symptoms while maximizing pain management with nonpharmalogical therapies and nonopioid medications.

In addition to these publications, the CDC offers additional online [clinical tools](#) to assist providers in balancing pain management with the potential risks that prescription opioids pose. For information and resources, visit the CDC webpage on [opioid overdose](#).

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