



## Talking Points

As a health care provider, you influence the choices your patients make. We encourage you to cover these key points when prescribing an opioid to your patients. Thank you for helping prevent opioid misuse!

### What?

- Opioids are a type of pain medication that can be highly addictive. Examples are oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, morphine, and others.<sup>1</sup>
- Heroin and fentanyl are also opioids.

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### Why?

#### Protect loved ones

- Opioids are now one of the leading causes of injury-related deaths in Washington State.
- More people die from overdose than from car crashes.<sup>2</sup>
- 75 percent of opioid misuse starts with people using medication that wasn't prescribed for them — usually taken from a friend or family member.<sup>3</sup>
- Promptly removing leftover opioid prescriptions from your home and safely disposing of your medications at a dropbox kiosk helps prevent misuse by a friend, family member, or other home visitor and reduces the risk of deadly overdose.

#### Protect the environment

- Safe disposal not only helps prevent misuse and overdose deaths, it's also important for the health of our environment.
- Scientists have found medicines in Pacific Northwest water and soils.<sup>4</sup> Even at low levels, these medicines can harm the health of wildlife and drinking water.
- Drop box kiosks or mail-back envelopes are the only environmentally safe way to dispose of old or unused opioid medications.

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### What?

#### Encourage your patients to take these simple steps.

Safely dispose of unused, expired, or unwanted medications. Visit [MED-Project.org](http://MED-Project.org) to find a safe disposal kiosk near you. Kiosks are also conveniently located at retail pharmacies, police stations, health centers, and other community sites.

- When you take home an opioid prescription lock up your medication.
- Try other pain management techniques.
- Use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®) to control pain.
- Exercise and stretch if you are able to. Visit a physical therapist.
- Try cognitive therapy or mindfulness practices you can do at home.

<sup>1</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse

<sup>2</sup> Washington State Department of Health

<sup>3</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<sup>4</sup> Washington State Department of Ecology