When taking medication for pain, it is often best to start with non-opioid pain treatments. Consider other options that may work just as well, but have far fewer risks.

**NON-OPIOID PAIN TREATMENT**

Depending on the kind of pain, there may be non-medication pain treatment options to consider:

- **Physical therapy**, massage, and acupuncture.
- Counseling with a psychologist, social worker, psychiatrist, or other therapist for help managing the emotional aspect of pain.
- Exercises such as walking, pilates, core exercises, swimming, dancing, and yoga.
- Other options such as diet and nutrition, art and music therapy, functional medicine, traditional medicine, and meditation.

**WHY BE CAUTIOUS WITH OPIOIDS?**

Opioid medications are chemically similar to heroin, with serious risk of addiction and overdose, even when taken as directed:

- **Drug overdose was Alaska’s leading cause of accidental death for 2016.** Opioid addiction is driving the epidemic.
  - Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

- **More than 3 out of 5 drug overdoses involve an opioid.**
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

- **Nationally, 4 out of 5 heroin users started out misusing prescription opioids.**
  - American Society of Addiction Medicine

- **7% of Alaska youth have misused a prescription pain medication in the past 30 days.**
  - 2017 Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey

- **More than 40% of teens who misused or abused a prescription found it in their parent’s medicine cabinet.**
  - Partnership for Drug-Free Kids
**OPIOID MEDICATION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

While opioid medications are sometimes the right choice for treating severe pain, such as from cancer or immediately after a surgery, there are many things to consider.

**IF YOU’RE PRESCRIBED AN OPIOID, DISCUSS WITH YOUR PROVIDER ...**

- History of trauma, psychiatric illness including anxiety or depression, and personal or family history of substance use disorder.
- Medications, alcohol or other substances you may be using.
- Dosing and timing of opioid medication.
- Side effects such as dizziness, difficulty breathing, constipation, sexual dysfunction, worsening pain, overdose, or others.

**IF YOU’RE PRESCRIBED AN OPIOID FOR ACUTE PAIN ...**

- Opioid prescriptions should ideally be for no more than a three day supply (often this is as few as 10 pills).
- The fewer days you’re on an opioid, and the lower the dose, the lower the risk of dependence will be. Ask for the lowest dose possible, for the shortest amount of time.

**HELP KEEP YOU AND THOSE AROUND YOU SAFE.**

**SECURELY STORE MEDICATION**
Store out of reach of children, teens and others for whom they are not intended.

**SAFELY DISPOSE OF UNUSED MEDICATION**
- Take unused medication to:
  - Denali Pharmacy at FMH
  - Fairbanks Police Dept.
  - Bassett Army Community Hospital
  - North Pole Prescription Lab
  - North Pole Police Dept.
  - Eielson Clinic
- Or, pick up a free disposal kit at the Public Health Center to safely dispose of your medications at home.
- Or, to find out about upcoming National Prescription Drug Take Back events, visit www.takebackday.dea.gov.

**NEVER SHARE OPIOIDS**
Sharing puts people at unnecessary risk for addiction, overdose and even death. Prescription opioids are controlled substances — sharing is illegal.

**“IS IT AN OPIOID?”**

Examples of opioid medication:
- Codeine
- Fentanyl (Duragesic)
- Hydrocodone (Vicodin, Norco)
- Hydromorphone (Dilaudid)
- Meperidine (Demerol)
- Methadone
- Morphine (MS Contin, Kadian)
- Oxymorphone (Opana)
- Oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet)
- Tramadol (Ultram)

There are many others, so be sure to ask if your medication is an opioid.

Learn more: [WWW.OPIOIDS. ALASKA.GOV](http://WWW.OPIOIDS. ALASKA.GOV) / Alaska Department of Health and Social Services / 3.7.18