

The Great OPIOID SIDE EFFECT Lottery



Opioids ('strong painkillers') can be really useful for a short time – after an injury or surgery. But longer term they aren't much help. **They only reduce pain for about 20 percent of people in the long term.**

So out of every 100 people, 80 get no benefit long term. And they'll still get the side effects.

If you're taking opioids, the chances are you'll be experiencing at least some of the side effects listed here. **Tick the ones that affect you**, and you may decide it's time to review your medicines with your clinician.

(Remember – never come off your medicines suddenly as this may cause other problems).

- Feeling dizzy, sickness 17 to 35
in every 100
people
- Sweating 35
in every 100
people
- Confused, sleepy 14 to 29
in every 100
people
- Constipation 20 to 40
in every 100
people
- Risk of falls and fractures
- Weight gain 29
in every 100
people

- Dry mouth 50
in every 100
people
- Reduced sex drive, erectile dysfunction, infertility 25
in every 100
people
- Unable to pass urine 4
in every 100
people
- Immune system affected
- Increased levels of pain
- Sleep problems 26
in every 100
people
- Forget things / memory loss 24
in every 100
people
- Euphoria (feeling high)
- Mood changes
- Emotionally numb

Other consequences

Tolerance – your body gets used to it, so the same dose is less effective than it used to be

Dependence – withdrawal symptoms if stopping suddenly or without clinical support

Addiction – psychological dependence and behaviour patterns develop

Misuse – not using them in a responsible way

