

JUNE 27, 2024

# KNOW! STRATEGIES FOR OPIOID SAFETY



Earlier this month, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed an [Executive Order](#) classifying nitazenes as Schedule 1 substances. This reclassification indicates that nitazenes have a high potential for misuse and addiction and no currently accepted medical use. Nitazenes are synthetic opioids with similar risks as morphine and fentanyl. The changes brought by the executive order highlight the severity of the opioid crisis in Ohio and the need for an increased understanding of opioid safety strategies to prevent misuse and overdose.

## WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids are a type of drug that includes both strong prescription pain relievers, like oxycodone, and illegal drugs, like heroin. A healthcare provider may prescribe an opioid to reduce pain after a major injury or surgery. Opioids can be highly addictive, and using them can have serious risks.<sup>1,2</sup>

## WHY CAN OPIOIDS BE DANGEROUS?

Opioids can be used safely when they are taken for a short period of time and as prescribed. However, anyone who is prescribed or has access to opioids can be at risk for opioid misuse. Opioid misuse includes taking more than your prescribed dose, taking an opioid more often than prescribed, using an opioid to get high, or taking opioids that are not prescribed to you. Opioid misuse can lead to opioid use disorder and overdose. Opioids have a high potential for addiction, so it is extremely important to know their risks and strategies for keeping yourself, your loved ones, and your community safe from misuse.<sup>1,3</sup>

## HOW CAN I TAKE PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS SAFELY?

If you have been prescribed an opioid, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about safe use. Before you begin taking prescription opioids, you should know how much medicine to take and how often, how long you will need to take it, possible side effects, how to stop taking your medication, and warning signs for addiction. Take your prescription opioids exactly as prescribed. Monitor how many doses you have and how often you need to get refills. If you're getting refills more often than you expect, it may be a sign of misuse.<sup>1,3</sup>

## HOW CAN I STORE PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS SAFELY?

Two-thirds of teens who report misusing prescription drugs say they get them from friends and family, often directly from household medicine, and nine out of ten poisonings of children 12 and under involve medicine.<sup>4,5</sup> Safely storing your prescription opioids and other medications is essential to keeping yourself and your loved ones safe. Prescription opioids should be stored in their original containers and out of reach and sight of young children. The safest way to store prescription opioids is in a locked cabinet or medication lock box that cannot be accessed by children, neighbors, or guests.<sup>6</sup>

## HOW CAN I DISPOSE OF PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS SAFELY?

Unused and expired medication poses a danger of misuse and needs to be disposed of properly. There are various ways to safely dispose of your medications:

- Place your unused medication in a drug dropbox. You can find a dropbox near you at [ohiorxdisposal.com](http://ohiorxdisposal.com) or [safe.pharmacy/drug-disposal](http://safe.pharmacy/drug-disposal).
- Participate in a local or national Drug Take Back Day. Information about drug takeback days in your area can be found at [dea.gov/takebackday](http://dea.gov/takebackday).
- Use an at-home prescription drug deactivation pouch and then dispose of the medications in the trash.
- If no other options are available, you can safely dispose of medications by mixing them with an undesirable substance like coffee grounds or cat litter and throwing the sealed mixture into the trash.<sup>3,6</sup>

## HOW ELSE CAN I PREVENT OPIOID OVERDOSE?

In addition to practicing opioid safety, harm reduction tools like fentanyl test strips and naloxone help prevent opioid overdose and death. Ohioans can obtain free naloxone, fentanyl test strips, and overdose response education at [Project DAWN](#) locations.

## RESOURCES

[Know, Secure, Dispose - Prevention Action Alliance](#)

[Safe Storage and Disposal - Generation Rx](#)

[Opioid Abuse Prevention | Ohio Department of Education and Workforce](#)

[Home - Generation Rx](#)



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