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## Oxycodone for pain relief (OxyContin, OxyNorm)

**This medicine is an opioid painkiller. There is a serious risk of addiction when taking this medicine, especially if used long-term.** The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued **new guidance for people prescribed an opioid painkiller.** If you have any questions or concerns about taking opioids safely please speak with your doctor or a pharmacist.

Oxycodone is prescribed to treat severe pain.

You may be prescribed oxycodone to take regularly, or only when it is needed for pain relief. Make sure you know which is right for you.

The most common side-effects are constipation, drowsiness and feeling sick (nausea). Your doctor will be able to prescribe medicines for you to take with oxycodone to help with some of these side-effects.

# About oxycodone

Type of medicine	Strong opioid painkiller
Used for	Severe pain in adults
Also called	Ixyldone®; Longtec®; Lynlor®; Oxeltra®; Oxyact®; OxyContin®; Oxylan®; OxyNorm®; Oxypro®; Reltebon®; Renocontin®; Shortec®; Combination brands: Myloxifin®, Oxyargin®, Targinact® (oxycodone with naloxone)
Available as	Capsules, modified-release tablets, oral liquid medicine, and injection

**Strong opioids** (sometimes called opiates) are medicines used to treat severe pain. Oxycodone is a type of strong opioid. It is used in particular to treat pain after a surgical operation and pain caused by **cancer**. It works on your nervous system and brain to reduce the amount of pain you feel.

Oxycodone can be taken as capsules or as a liquid medicine, both of which start working quickly to ease pain. It can also be taken as slow-release tablets – these release oxycodone over several hours to provide a more even pain control. It is also available as an injection. Oxycodone is sometimes used in combination with another medicine called naloxone (in a brand called Targinact®). The naloxone helps to reduce some of the side-effects of oxycodone, such as constipation.

## Before taking oxycodone

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine may only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you start taking oxycodone, it is important that your doctor knows:

- If you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breastfeeding.
- If you have heart, liver, or kidney problems.

- If you have prostate problems or any difficulties passing urine.
- If you have any breathing problems, such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- If you have a sleep-related breathing problem such as sleep apnoea.
- If you have been told you have low blood pressure (hypotension).
- If you have any problems with your thyroid, pancreas, or adrenal glands.
- If you have epilepsy.
- If you have a problem with your bile duct.
- If you have been constipated for more than a week or have an inflammatory bowel problem.
- If you have a condition causing muscle weakness, called myasthenia gravis.
- If you have a rare blood disorder called porphyria.
- If you have recently had a severe head injury.
- If you have ever had a mental health problem called psychosis.
- If you have ever been dependent on drugs or alcohol.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.
- If you are taking any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as as herbal and complementary medicines.

## **How to take oxycodone**

- Before you start this treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside your pack. The manufacturer's leaflet will give you more information about the specific brand of oxycodone you have been prescribed, and a full list of the side-effects which you may experience from taking it.

- Take oxycodone exactly as your doctor tells you to. Depending on the reason you are taking it, your doctor may advise that you take regular doses or only when you need it for pain relief. Make sure you know which is right for you.
- If you have been prescribed the quick-acting capsules or liquid medicine, you will be asked to take a dose every 4-6 hours. If you have been given slow-release tablets, they are taken twice a day, 12 hours apart. Swallow the tablets whole with a drink of water - it is very important you do not break or crush them before they are swallowed.
- You can take oxycodone before or after food.
- If you forget to take a dose, check the manufacturer's information leaflet for advice about what to do. Depending upon when your next dose is due, you will either be recommended to take a dose when you remember or wait for your next dose. Never take two doses together to make up for a missed dose.

## Getting the most from your treatment

- Ask your doctor for advice before drinking alcohol while you are on this medicine. Your doctor may recommend you do not drink alcohol while you are on oxycodone because it increases the possibility of side-effects such as feeling dizzy and sleepy.
- If you are a driver, please be aware that oxycodone is likely to affect your reactions and ability to drive. It is an offence to drive while your reactions are impaired. Even if your driving ability is not impaired, should you drive, you are advised to carry with you some evidence that the medicine has been prescribed for you - a repeat prescription form or a patient information leaflet from the pack is generally considered suitable.
- There are several different brands and strengths of oxycodone tablets and capsules. Each time you collect a prescription, check to make sure it contains what you are expecting. Ask your pharmacist to check for you if you are unsure about anything.
- If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment that you are taking oxycodone as a painkiller.

- If you buy any medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are suitable for you to take with oxycodone. Many other medicines have similar side-effects to oxycodone, and taking them together will increase the risk of unwanted effects.
- If you are planning a trip abroad, you are advised to carry a letter with you from your doctor to explain that you have been prescribed oxycodone. This is because it is classed as a 'controlled drug' and is subject to certain restrictions.
- Do not take oxycodone for longer than you have been advised by your doctor. This is because repeatedly using oxycodone may lead to your body becoming dependent on it. When you then stop taking it, it will cause withdrawal symptoms such as restlessness and irritability. If you are concerned about this, discuss it with your doctor or pharmacist.

## **Can oxycodone cause problems?**

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the most common ones associated with oxycodone. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

Common oxycodone side-effects - these affect fewer than 1 in 10 people who take this medicine	What can I do if I experience this?
Feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting), indigestion, tummy (abdominal) pain	Stick to simple meals - avoid rich or spicy foods. If this continues, let your doctor know
Feeling dizzy, sleepy or drowsy	If this happens, do not drive and do not use tools or machines. Do not drink alcohol
Shallow breathing and other breathing problems	Let your doctor know about this
Constipation	Eat a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of water each day. If this continues to be a problem, speak with your doctor
Diarrhoea	Drink plenty of water to replace any lost fluids
Dry mouth	Try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking sugar-free sweets
Other common side-effects include: reduced appetite, feeling confused or disorientated, difficulty sleeping, headache, chills, itching, sweating, and rash	If any of these become troublesome, speak with your doctor

**Important:** people taking opioid medicines, and their family and friends, should be aware of the risk of accidental overdose and know when to seek medical help. The risk is higher if you also take other medicines that make you feel drowsy. Signs you have taken too much medicine include:

- Feeling very sleepy or dizzy.

- Feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting).
- Breathing difficulties.
- Loss of consciousness.

If you have taken more oxycodone than you should or someone else accidentally swallows your medication, call for an ambulance and tell them the name of your medicine.

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to this medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist.

## How to store oxycodone

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.
- Many liquid preparations of oxycodone only keep for a few weeks once the bottle has been opened. Check the label for further details and write on it the date you open the bottle.

## Important information about all medicines

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

## Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, OxyNorm® 5 mg, 10 mg and 20 mg capsules](#); Napp Pharmaceuticals Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated March 2022.
- [Manufacturer's PIL, OxyNorm® liquid 5 mg/5 ml oral solution](#); Napp Pharmaceuticals Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated March 2022.
- [Manufacturer's PIL, OxyContin® 5 mg, 10 mg, 15 mg, 20 mg, 30 mg, 40mg, 60 mg, 80 mg and 120 mg prolonged-release tablets](#); Napp Pharmaceuticals Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated March 2022.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 88th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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