



Consumers Can Help Prevent
Harmful Medication Incidents

SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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Safer Choices for Pain Control after Wisdom Tooth Removal

Are you (or is someone you know) scheduled to have a wisdom tooth removed? Pain after wisdom tooth removal is common, so dentists and oral surgeons often prescribe strong pain medications called opioids. Examples of opioid medications are codeine, morphine, and hydromorphone. Opioids are effective in treating pain, but they can also be harmful. For example, even a short-term prescription can lead to dependence or addiction.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received a report about a teen who was given a prescription for an opioid after removal of wisdom teeth. The teen's parent was aware of the risks with opioid use and looked for safer options knowing that the pain would last for only a short time. The pain was managed using a non-opioid pain medication called naproxen.

Opioid use disorder, including dependence and addiction, is a *big* problem in Canada and other countries. To reduce the risk of opioid-related problems, consider trying other options for treating pain.

SafeMedicationUse.ca shared the following tips to help relieve the pain that occurs after wisdom tooth removal:

- **Start with non-opioid pain relievers** like acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen. Ask your dentist or pharmacist whether these medications would work for you.
- **Use non-drug pain treatments** like ice and cold packs to reduce pain and swelling. Consider if distraction techniques like listening to music might be helpful.
- **If you do need an opioid pain reliever, use it for less than 3 days.** If you feel that the number of opioid doses prescribed for you is more than you need, talk to your pharmacist when you pick up your prescription. As you start to feel better, you should have less pain and need less medication.
- **If the pain is still bothering you after a few days, go back to see your dentist or oral surgeon.**



For tips on how to manage pain after wisdom tooth removal, read [Managing pain after wisdom teeth removal: Your questions answered](#). It's a new resource that was developed in partnership with Choosing Wisely Canada and the Canadian Association of Hospital Dentists.

Medication safety bulletins contribute to Global Patient Safety Alerts.

This newsletter was developed in collaboration with Best Medicines Coalition and Patients for Patient Safety Canada. Recommendations are shared with healthcare providers, through the ISMP Canada Safety Bulletin, so that changes can be made together. This newsletter shares information about safe medication practices, is noncommercial, and is therefore exempt from Canadian anti-spam legislation.