

# Oxycodone

## What is oxycodone?

Oxycodone hydrochloride belongs to a group of medicines called opioid analgesics. It is a depressant drug which means it slows down the messages travelling between the brain and the body. Depressant drugs do not necessarily make a person feel depressed. Other depressants include alcohol, cannabis and heroin.

Oxycodone is most commonly prescribed by doctors to relieve moderate to severe pain. However, there is increasing concern among medical professionals about the risks of using these drugs, particularly when they are used for a long time.

Under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), oxycodone is a Schedule 8 drug. Doctors must follow state and territory laws when prescribing oxycodone and must notify, or receive approval from, the appropriate health authority.

Some people misuse oxycodone to become intoxicated, which can result in serious side effects.

## Types of oxycodone

Oxycodone comes in a number of forms including capsules, tablets, liquid and suppositories. It also comes in a variety of strengths.

## Common oxycodone brand names

Oxynorm<sup>®</sup>, OxyContin<sup>®</sup>, Endone<sup>®</sup>, Proladone<sup>®</sup>, Targin<sup>®</sup>.

## Slang names

Hillbilly heroin, oxy, OC and O.

## How are they used?

Oxycodone is usually swallowed but is sometimes injected or used as a suppository.

To prevent OxyContin<sup>®</sup> tablets being injected by people who misuse them,

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they were reformulated on 1 April 2014. The tablets are now resistant to crushing and become a thick gel when added to water. They also have controlled release properties, even as a gel.

## Effects of oxycodone

Use of any drug always carries some risk. It's important to be careful when taking any type of drug and follow your doctor's prescription. Contact your doctor if you are concerned about the side effects of oxycodone.

Oxycodone affects everyone differently, but the effects may include:

- Pain relief
- Dizziness or faintness
- Tiredness
- Confusion and difficulty concentrating
- Euphoria or negative mood
- Restlessness
- Blurred vision
- Stiff muscles
- Constipation
- Dry mouth
- Stomach ache and nausea
- Difficulty urinating
- Slow pulse
- Excess sweating, flushing and itching
- Mild allergic rash or hives (see your doctor promptly)

If a large amount of oxycodone is taken, the following may be experienced:

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Small pupils
- Decreased awareness or responsiveness
- Extreme drowsiness and loss of consciousness
- No muscle tone or movement
- Slow or irregular heartbeat

These effects may indicate an overdose. Call triple zero (000) immediately if someone looks they like have had oxycodone and are in trouble. Ambulance officers don't have to involve the police. If possible, have the medicine with

you so the ambulance officers know what has been taken. While you wait for help to arrive:

- Stay with the person
- Make sure they have enough air and loosen tight clothing
- If they lie down, put them on their side in case they vomit

Injecting oxycodone when misusing the drug may also cause:

- Vein damage and scarring
- Infection including tetanus, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS
- Deep vein thrombosis and clots causing loss of limbs, damage to organs, stroke and possibly death

Injecting drugs repeatedly and sharing injecting equipment with other people increases the risk of experiencing these effects.

### Long-term effects

Regular use of oxycodone may cause:

- Dental problems
- Swelling in the arms and legs
- Mood swings
- Reduced sex drive and decreased level of testosterone (males) and menstrual problems (females)
- Needing to use more to get the same effect
- Financial, work or social problems

### Using oxycodone with other drugs

The effects of taking oxycodone with other drugs can be unpredictable and dangerous, and could cause:

- **Oxycodone + alcohol:** increased confusion and clumsiness, and breathing difficulties.
- **Oxycodone + some antidepressants (Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors - MAOIs):** delirium, convulsions, respiratory failure, coma and death.

## Withdrawal

Giving up oxycodone after using it for a long time is challenging because the body has to get used to functioning without it. This is why it's important to seek advice from a health professional when planning to stop taking oxycodone, whether you have been taking it with a prescription or not.

Withdrawal symptoms vary from person to person and are different depending on the type of oxycodone taken. Symptoms usually last for approximately one week and can include:

- Watery eyes
- Runny nose
- Uncontrollable yawning
- Difficulty sleeping and severe restlessness
- Hot and cold flushes
- Pains in muscles and joints
- Muscle spasms and tremors
- Loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Uncontrolled kicking movements

### Further Information

The Druginfo website has information on:

- Treatment
- Help and support
- The law
- References for this fact sheet

Go to [druginfo.adf.org.au](http://druginfo.adf.org.au)

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Page 4 / 4

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