PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS AND SENIORS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Prescription opioids (pain pills) are often given following a surgery or injury, or for certain illnesses like cancer and can help relieve pain. But if misused they can cause harm.

Seniors, you may be at greater risk for opioid poisoning, hospitalization and addiction because you might be taking several medications and your body has changed with age.

You can misuse opioids by:

- Taking more pain pills than prescribed.
- Taking pain pills more often than prescribed.
- Taking pain pills for reasons they were not prescribed (e.g. emotional pain or loneliness).

It's important to review your medications with your health care provider to ensure you are getting the safest, most effective care.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS OF TAKING OPIOIDS?

- **Risk of overdose.** You and your family should be aware of the signs of an overdose and what to do including where to get a Naloxone kit.

- Increased risk of **interactions with alcohol and other drugs.**

- Increased **tolerance** (need more medication for same pain relief) and **dependence** (have symptoms of withdrawal when medication is stopped).

- Increased **risk of falling** due to drowsiness and altered balance.

MANAGING YOUR MEDICATIONS

Ask your health care provider if it is possible to manage your pain without opioids. If you continue to take opioids for pain:

- Use only as prescribed.

- Have your health care provider or pharmacist review all of your medications each year.

- Store prescription opioids in a secure place and out of reach of others.

- Return medication that you are not using to a pharmacy for safe disposal.

For more information, call Health Connection at 1-877-721-7520, or learn more at www.smdhu.org/stopoverdoses

SIMCOE MUSKOKA OPIOID STRATEGY

simcoe muskoka DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

There is a serious risk of addiction and overdose, especially with long-term opioid use.

Seniors are at a greater risk for opioid-related harms because of multiple medication use and age-related changes to the body.