

# The Great OPIOID SIDE EFFECT Lottery



Opioids ('strong painkillers') can be really useful for a short time – after an injury or surgery. But longer term they aren't much help. They only reduce pain for about 10 percent of people in the long term.

So out of every 100 people, 90 get no benefit long term. And they'll still get the side effects.

If you're taking opioids, the chances are you'll be experiencing at least some of the side effects listed here. Tick the ones that affect you, and you may decide it's time to review your medicines with your clinician.

(Remember – never come off your medicines suddenly as this may cause other problems).

- Feeling dizzy, sickness 17 to 35  
in every 100  
people
- Sweating 35  
in every 100  
people
- Confused, sleepy 14 to 29  
in every 100  
people
- Constipation 20 to 40  
in every 100  
people
- Risk of falls and fractures
- Weight gain 29  
in every 100  
people

- Dry mouth 50  
in every 100  
people
- Reduced sex drive, erectile dysfunction, infertility 25  
in every 100  
people
- Unable to pass urine 4  
in every 100  
people
- Immune system affected
- Increased levels of pain
- Sleep problems 26  
in every 100  
people
- Forget things / memory loss 24  
in every 100  
people
- Euphoria (feeling high)
- Mood changes
- Emotionally numb

## Other consequences

**Tolerance** – your body gets used to it, so the same dose is less effective than it used to be

**Dependence** – withdrawal symptoms if stopping suddenly or without clinical support

**Addiction** – psychological dependence and behaviour patterns develop

**Misuse** – not using them in a responsible way

Find out more at  
[livewellwithpain.co.uk](http://livewellwithpain.co.uk)

