

# 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