

The Slippery Slope of Opioid Use

What are opioids?

Opioids are not just “pills.” Opioids are drugs that block pain signals to the brain. They can have very serious side effects. Commonly prescribed opioids include hydrocodone, oxycodone, codeine, morphine and fentanyl. Heroin is also an opioid.

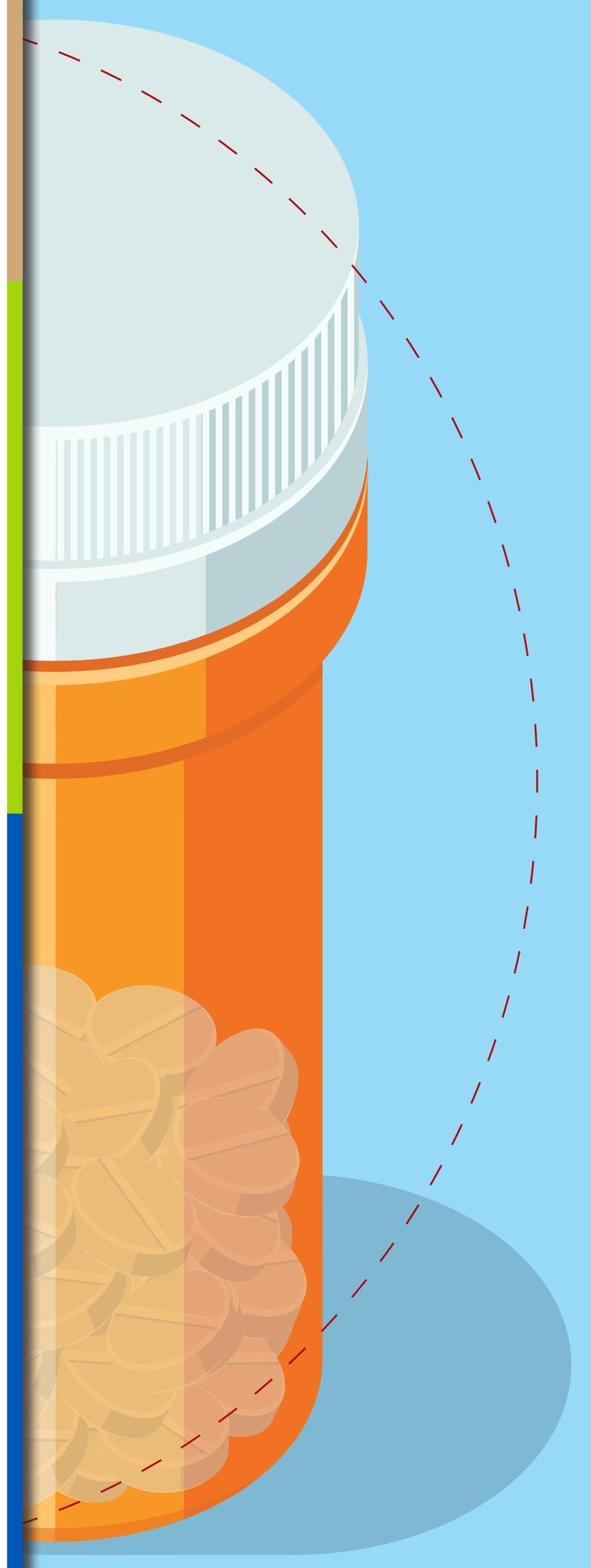
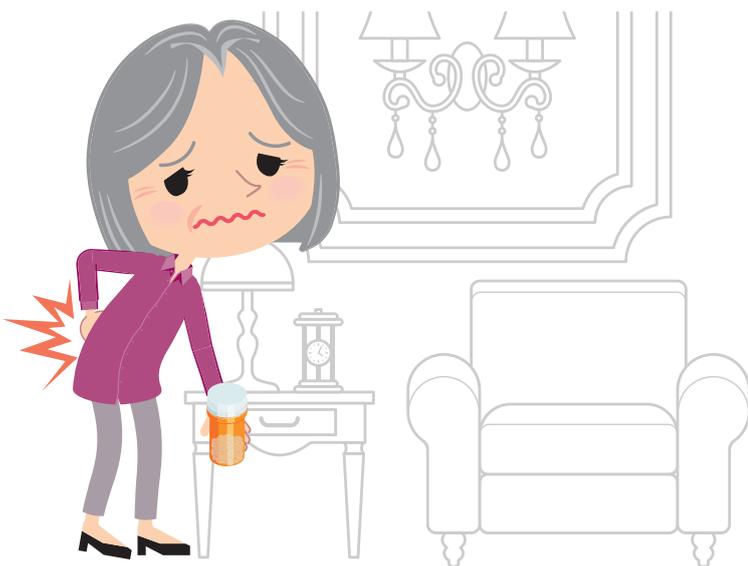
Why are opioids dangerous?

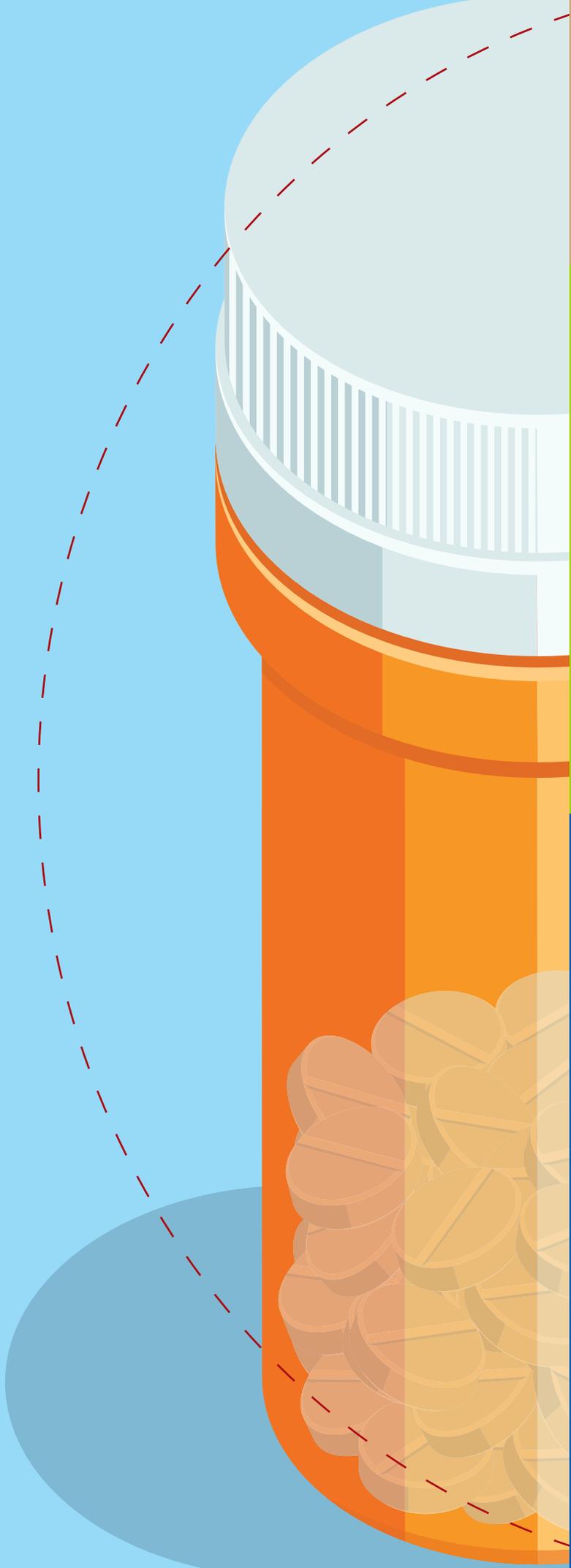
- Opioid medications can be addictive.
- Overdosing on opioids can happen by accident.
- Opioids can cause serious side effects, such as constipation, nausea, vomiting, dry mouth, sleepiness, dizziness, confusion, and increased sensitivity to pain.

Are there alternatives to using opioids?

For many patients, pain can be successfully managed with non-opioid options. These could include:

- Exercise and strength training, with your doctor’s guidance



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- Relaxation methods and physical therapy
 - Non-prescription pain relievers
 - Massage, chiropractic care, or acupuncture from a licensed practitioner
 - Other prescription medicines or treatments, such as steroid injections

FACT: Nearly 80 percent of heroin users indicate they started with prescription opioids.

**What should I do if my doctor prescribes an opioid?
If you're prescribed a prescription pain pill, ask your doctor:**

- What's my risk of becoming addicted to this medicine?
- Does this prescription interfere with any other medicine I'm currently taking?
- Am I taking the lowest dosage possible for the shortest amount of time?
- If I take this medicine, what should I do when I'm ready to stop?
- Are there other non-opioid medications I could take instead?
- Are there other treatments I could try instead of medication?

Remember – your doctor is your partner in your pain treatment plan. Don't be afraid to discuss your medicine with your doctor.

To learn more about prescription opioids and how you can manage your pain, visit www.qualityinsights-qin.org.

Want to see this message come to life? Visit our YouTube channel at http://bit.ly/QI_YouTube to watch our short video titled *The Slippery Slope of Opioid Use*. And while you're there, check out our *Palliative Care and Oranges*, *Annual Wellness Visit: A Tune Up for Your Body*, and *Antibiotics: The Right Tool for The Right Problem* videos.

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