

# Parker & Waichman, LLP Attorneys at Law

## Oxycontin Information Guide



**Manufacturer:**  
Purdue Pharma LP

**Generic Name:**  
Oxycodone hydrochloride

**Date Approved:**  
July 18, 2001

**Status:**  
On the market

**Approved Uses:**  
Arthritis  
Back pain  
Cancer

**Serious Side Effects:**  
Physical dependence  
Addiction  
Death

**Related Topics:**  
Defective Drug

### The Case Against Oxycontin:

Oxycontin (generic name: oxycodone HCl controlled-release) is linked to physical dependence and addiction. Oxycontin contains a narcotic similar to morphine and has been prescribed to treat pain in cases of arthritis, back pain, and cancer.

OxyContin was first introduced in December 1995 and belongs to the drug class known as opioid agonists and is categorized as a Schedule II controlled substance. The active ingredient in OxyContin is oxycodone, a substance found in many different pain medications. However, most other pain medications contain small amounts of oxycodone; OxyContin is a time-release formula that contains a significantly greater amount of oxycodone. Oxycontin is both one of the best selling prescription medications and one of the most abused drugs in history.

OxyContin is indicated for the management of moderate to severe pain; it is commonly prescribed to treat arthritis, back pain, cancer, and other types of painful conditions. A disturbing amount of reports have surfaced detailing widespread addiction to the drug from patients that were prescribed the drug as well as people obtaining the drug through illegal channels. Oxycontin has been linked to over a hundred deaths and its high and addiction has been compared to those of heroin.

The devastation associated with this drug includes armed robberies, criminal indictments of doctors, individual and state lawsuits against Purdue Pharma, and concern from the DEA and FDA. The DEA has asked Purdue Pharma to change its strategy regarding Oxycontin.

These suggestions included: marketing OxyContin only to pain specialists, omit its claim that OxyContin is less subject to abuse than other narcotics, and to reformulate the drug.

On July 25, 2001, at the urging of the FDA, Purdue Pharma added new warnings to Oxycontin. OxyContin will bear the FDA's strongest type of warning, a black box calling OxyContin as potentially addictive as morphine. Purdue Pharma sent out letters to doctors asking them to only prescribe Oxycontin for severe pain. However, Purdue Pharma still asserts that there is no problem with Oxycontin.

On August 9, 2001, Purdue Pharma announced that it is working on patent application for a new formula of the opiate-based drug Oxycontin, hoping to make it less susceptible to abuse and addiction. In the meantime, the number crime and death attributed to Oxycontin continue to rise.

If you or a loved one has been injured by Oxycontin, Parker & Waichman, LLP will evaluate your case for free. [Click here for a free, no obligation, case evaluation.](#)

## **Oxycontin (Oxycodone hydrochloride)**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

Oxycodone is a very powerful and potentially addictive opioid analgesic medication synthesized from thebaine.

It is effective orally and is marketed in combination with aspirin (Percodan, Endodan, Roxiprin) or acetaminophen (Percocet, Endocet, Roxicet, Tylox) for the relief of pain. It is also sold in a sustained-release form by Purdue Pharma under the trade name OxyContin and instant-release forms OxyIR, OxyNorm and Percolone . OxyContin is available in 10, 20, 40, and 80 mg tablets, and, due to its sustained-release mechanism, is effective for eight to twelve hours. (The 160 mg formulation was discontinued in May 2001.) OxyNorm is available in 5, 10, and 20 mg capsules; also as a 1 mg/1 ml liquid in 250 mg bottles and as a 10 mg/1 ml concentrated liquid in 100 mg bottles.

In the United States, oxycodone is a Schedule II controlled substance both as a single agent and in combination products containing acetaminophen or aspirin.

### **Medical use**

Oxycodone is one of the most powerful medications for pain control that can be taken orally. Percocet tablets (oxycodone with acetaminophen) are routinely prescribed for post-operative pain control. Oxycodone is also used in treatment of moderate to severe chronic pain. When used at recommended doses for relatively short periods (several weeks), it provides effective pain control with manageable side effects.

Nausea, constipation, lightheadedness, rash, dizziness, and emotional mood disorders are the most frequently reported side effects.

Tolerance and physical dependence occurs after several months of treatment, with larger doses being required to achieve the same degree of analgesia.

According to the DEA and the companies that manufacture the drug, psychological addiction as a result of medical use is extremely rare. However, there are several lawsuits underway brought by plaintiffs who claim that they became addicted to the drug as a result of medical use.

### **Abuse**

The introduction of OxyContin in 1995 resulted in increasing patterns of abuse. Unlike Percocet, whose potential for abuse is limited by the presence of acetaminophen, OxyContin contains only oxycodone and inert filler. Abusers crush the tablets to defeat the time-release mechanism, then either ingest the resulting powder orally, intranasally, via intravenous/intramuscular/subcutis injection, or rectally to achieve rapid absorption into the bloodstream. The vast majority of OxyContin-related deaths are attributed to ingesting

substantial quantities of OxyContin or ingesting OxyContin along with another depressant of the central nervous system such as alcohol or benzodiazepines. While high doses of oxycodone can be fatal to an opiate-naïve individual in and of itself, this is (comparatively) rarely the case. It was once felt that "combination" opioids (those that contain one or more additional, non-narcotic ingredients) would be less subject to abuse, since, for example, the amount of acetaminophen present in large overdoses of Percocet would cause stomach upset and liver damage. However, it has been demonstrated that abusers seeking the euphoric "high" are not deterred by the gastrologic or hepatic symptoms. Abusers soon discovered that extremely simple methods to separate the ingredients exist, particularly due to the widely disparate solubility of the alkaloids and analgesics in water ("cold water extraction").

Similar thinking also once motivated Canadian authorities to package oral methadone for use only in combination with Tang, an orange-flavored beverage powder, in hopes that it would only be taken correctly; however, it was still abused.

Oxycodone has similar effects to morphine and heroin, and appeals to the same abuse community. Armed robberies of pharmacies where the robber demanded only OxyContin, not cash, have occurred. In some areas, particularly the eastern U.S., OxyContin has been the drug of greatest concern to enforcement authorities. Oxycodone abuse has been notably problematic in Appalachia; because of this, the drug has earned the nickname hillbilly heroin.

Because oxycodone is highly regulated, when acquired illegally it is quite expensive. Street prices in Washington, DC, for example, have been reported to be anywhere from fifty cents to one dollar per milligram, making it anywhere from 30 to 60 times more costly than gold, gram for gram.

Like other opioids, oxycodone can be fatal at high doses or when combined with depressants such as alcohol. Several documented fatalities from OxyContin abuse have been made public.

On October 10, 2003, talk radio personality Rush Limbaugh made a public admission of addiction to prescription pain medication, including OxyContin, and announced his intention to pursue inpatient treatment. Also in 2003, singer/actress Courtney Love was arrested for OxyContin abuse.

On August 4, 2005, 29 people in Miami, Florida were charged with taking part in an illegal drug ring involving OxyContin. The drug was obtained with forged prescriptions. Most of the people charged were workers or former workers in the Miami/Dade School district. If found guilty, they could each face up to 20 years in prison.

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