

Tips for change

At your pain review, you will have had a chance to talk about the upsides and downsides of staying on the same amount of opioids and other pain medicines and the upsides and downsides of reducing them. Whatever you have decided about reducing your opioids right now you may find these **tips for change** helpful.

Think about it ...

Remind yourself of the reasons for reducing the amount of opioids you take - What are the upsides of reducing opioids for you?

It can be reassuring to know that there are things you can do if change feels difficult or you're having a bad day. You can remind yourself of the helpful things

- that you do that you find soothe your pain (such as having a cup of tea, taking a hot bath), and
- that can distract you from pain (such as speaking to a friend, or getting some fresh air).

Talk about it ...

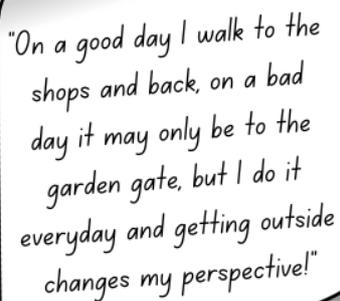
You may also find it helps to tell someone you trust that you're thinking about or making changes to your pain medicines so they can support you.

Write it down... Try it out ...

"I don't want to get locked into a cycle of more and more medicines to cope with the side effects."

"Dogs are up there, they make me more active when I can and they're support when I can't. Computer games work as good distractions too"

- You may find it helpful to write down your reasons to reduce the amount of opioids you take. You could write down your helpful things too and stick the notes where you'll be reminded.
- You could try doing the things that help you more often, notice how that works.
- It's natural to be worried about making change and 'trying things out' might feel less scary. If you have a plan to make a reduction, do what you can & give it a try.
- Even if, at the moment, you haven't made a plan to reduce your opioids, there are things that you could do to help. You could start noticing moments in your day, when



"On a good day I walk to the shops and back, on a bad day it may only be to the garden gate, but I do it everyday and getting outside changes my perspective!"

you're feeling a little stronger or more 'yourself'.

- Can you notice if there are moments when you do feel you cope better and you could try a change. You could try and rehearse what it feels like to make a change in these moments.

I'd like to try it out, what should I do

If you would like to try making a change and haven't yet made a plan to do so, then speak to your pharmacist at your next appointment, or contact them. You should be able to find their contact details on **Your Pain Action Plan**.

I am trying it out, what could I expect?

Slowly reducing the dose of opioids (over several weeks or months) allows your body time to adapt to the smaller dose. When opioids are reduced in this way, very few people report typical 'withdrawal symptoms'.

When they first reduce the dose, some people may notice a short-term increase in pain or feel tired, restlessness, or achy, but most people do not experience worse pain long-term.

It's normal to have days when you notice more pain or feel you are coping less well with your pain. If this happens whilst you are reducing opioids, it's natural to think it's because you're taking less opioids and you may wonder if you should increase the dose again. It's worth remembering that, like most people living with persistent pain, you probably had better and worse days before reducing your medicines and it is very likely that things will settle, as they have in the past.

Remember your pharmacist is here to support you, so before changing your plan then speak to your pharmacist, find their contact details on **Your Pain Action Plan**.

What else can I do for my pain?

Pain medicines, including opioids, are only one tool out of many options that help people to live well with persistent pain. You may have noted some of the things that help you already. To find out what other people have done to change the way they manage their pain, including videos of their experiences of reducing opioids, visit

www.mypainreview.co.uk