

PREVENT LOPERAMIDE ABUSE



Loperamide (also sold under the brand name Imodium®) is a prescription and over-the-counter medication approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to relieve the symptoms of diarrhea. Loperamide is safe and effective when used as directed. A small but growing number of individuals are intentionally misusing loperamide by consuming very high doses in an attempt to self-manage their opioid withdrawal or to achieve a euphoric high.

There are currently no treatment protocols for loperamide abuse or toxicity. However, it is important to recognize this issue and address it appropriately with patients who may be abusing or who may be at risk for abusing loperamide.

Taking very high doses of loperamide can lead to serious cardiac events and death.

KNOW THE SIGNS OF LOPERAMIDE ABUSE OR TOXICITY

According to research reports, patients most at risk for abusing loperamide are those experiencing opioid withdrawal and seeking a way to self-medicate. Signs of loperamide abuse include:

- » **Syncope, or fainting**
- » **Unresponsiveness**
- » **Irregular heart rhythms**
- » **Cardiac arrest**

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY AND PREVENT LOPERAMIDE ABUSE

Loperamide will not appear in a standard toxicology screen, and there is no urine test to screen for it. If you suspect a patient is abusing loperamide, ask:

- » **Have you been taking loperamide?**
- » **How much loperamide do you take and how often?**
- » **Are you aware of the severe heart risks associated with overuse, misuse, and abuse of loperamide?**

If a patient reports using more than the approved dose of loperamide, or if they report using it to help manage opioid withdrawal symptoms, educate them about the risks and connect them with appropriate treatment or resources for substance use disorder.

If a patient that you suspect of loperamide abuse faints or experiences a heart problem, call emergency services and let first responders know that you suspect loperamide abuse.

To learn more, visit **LOPERAMIDESAFETY.ORG**.

For behavioral health specialists.
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