

A Discussion Guide for Patients and Caregivers



While millions of Americans deal with pain, those living in rural communities face unique challenges to treatment. Patients may face geographic isolation and long travel distances to care, as well as limited access to specialists and treatments. At the same time, historically higher rates of opioid prescriptions in rural areas can contribute to dependency and addiction. These realities make access to new, non-addictive, non-opioid pain treatment options all the more important.

Knowing what to ask in the doctor's office can help patients and their caregivers get the most out of each visit and self-advocate for options in pain management, safer medication use, and overall support for their health needs.



Prepare for Appointments

Being ready to talk to your doctor starts well before your visit.

Consider these tips:

- Bring a list of current and past medications, noting side effects and effectiveness.
- Use a journal to record how your acute pain affects you.
- Be open about barriers to care there may be community resources, mobile clinics, or other local health initiatives designed for rural communities.



Explore Your Options

Opioids may not be the answer to everyone's pain, especially if addiction is a concern.

Ask your doctor:

- What risks should I be aware of with opioid use?
- Are there non-addictive, non-opioid options with the same effectiveness?
- How do non-opioid treatments compare to opioids in terms of safety and efficacy?



Ask for Resources

Providers may be able to connect you to resources that make access to treatment easier.

Ask your doctor:

- Can my prescription be delivered to my home?
- Are there any programs that can help reduce medication costs?
- What other resources do you have for managing pain?
- If a treatment is not covered by insurance, what are my options?

Everyone experiencing pain deserves access to treatments that can bring relief — no matter where they live.

Find more resources for pain management at <https://www.families-network.org/take-control-of-pain/>