

Facts about Oxycodone

Oxycodone (Trade Names: *Tylox*, *Percodan*, *Oxycontin*) is an effective analgesic for mild to moderate pain control, chronic pain syndromes, and for the treatment of terminal cancer pain.

Five mg of oxycodone is equivalent to 30 mg of codeine when administered orally.

Oxycodone and morphine are equipotent for pain control in the normal population; 10 mg of orally-administered oxycodone is equivalent to 10 mg of subcutaneously administered morphine. Oxycodone is considered to be in all respects morphine-like and, in spite of the chemical relationship to codeine, closer to morphine than to codeine in its dependence liability. Its abuse has been a continuing problem in the United States since the early 1960's. The abuse of a new sustained-release formulation of oxycodone, known as *Oxycontin*®, has escalated in recent years.

Oxycodone is a semisynthetic opioid structurally related to codeine and is approximately equipotent to morphine in producing opiate-like effects. The first report that oxycodone, sold under the brand name *Eukodal*, produced a "striking euphoria" and habituation symptoms was published in Germany in the 1920's. While oxycodone is metabolized by the liver to oxymorphone, the physiological and behavioral effects are not related to, nor dependent on, the formation of this metabolic by-product. Oxycodone will react as a normal opiate in the available field test kits.

Oxycodone is abused for its opiate-like effects. In addition to its equipotency to morphine in analgesic effects, it is also equipotent to morphine in relieving abstinence symptoms from chronic opiate (heroin, morphine) administration. Many dose forms are available. Oxycodone's behavioral effects can last up to 5 hours. The sustained-release formula has a longer duration of action (8-12 hours). The drug is most often administered orally. A recent study comparing controlled released products containing oxycodone (*Oxycontin*) and morphine (*MS Contin*) reported that *Oxycontin* was twice as potent as *MS Contin*. The growing awareness and concern about AIDS and blood-borne pathogens easily transmitted by syringe needle use, has made the oral bioavailability of Oxycodone attractive to the typical opiate abuser. As with most opiates, the adverse effects of oxycodone abuse are dependence and tolerance development.

Oxycodone-containing products are in tablet, capsule and liquid forms. A variety of colors, markings, and packaging are available. The major source of oxycodone to the street has been through forged prescriptions, professional diversion through unscrupulous pharmacists, doctors, and dentists, "doctor-shopping", and large-scale thefts. Oxycodone sells for \$0.50 to \$1.00 per milligram. A 40 mg tablet is sold for \$25-\$40, and the 80 mg tablets are being sold for \$65-\$80. The more recent 160 mg tablets do not have a stable price at this time, but sell for in excess of \$100 per tablet.

If you or a family member is experiencing a mental health or an alcohol or other drug-related emergency, seek immediate assistance by calling the 24-hour Suicide Prevention, Mental Health Crisis, Information and Referral Hotline: (216) 623-6888 or the United Way's First Call for Help, 211 or (216) 436-2000.