

## Mayo Clinic Minute

### What Painkillers Do to Your Guts

<b>Video</b>	<b>Audio</b>
<b>Vivien Williams</b>	How many opioid painkiller prescriptions are written in the US every year? More than 250 million. An estimated 4% of adults are being treated with opioids for chronic non-cancer pain, typically back pain and musculoskeletal pain.
<b>Michael Camilleri, M.D.</b> <b>Gastroenterology</b> <b>Mayo Clinic</b>	“We know that about 40 to 80 percent of people who receive opioids develop G.I. symptoms, and the most common G.I. symptom is constipation.”
<b>Vivien Williams</b>	Mayo Clinic Dr. Michael Camilleri says being constipated is not dangerous, but it can be very uncomfortable.
<b>Michael Camilleri, M.D.</b>	“Sometimes that discomfort can be interpreted as abdominal pain.”
<b>Vivien Williams</b>	Prompting people to increase their dose, making the situation worse.
<b>Michael Camilleri, M.D.</b>	“The two main reasons why opioids cause constipation are, first, the opioid kind of paralyzes the nerves and muscles.”
<b>Vivien Williams</b>	Second, they rev up your intestines to absorb excess liquid. So, what can you do about it? Eat fiber-rich foods, drink water and, if need be, try an over-the-counter laxative, even if you are prescribed opioids for a short period, like after an injury, fracture or operation. For severe cases, prescription medication may help.
<b>Vivien Williams</b>	Dr. Camilleri says the best remedy is to work with your health care provider to find alternatives to opioids. For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Vivien Williams.