



# LIFESTYLE: Health & Fitness

THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR ♦ TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2008 ♦ INDYSTAR.COM/LIVING

## ASK THE DOCTOR: Abusers of pain medicine may take many risks

Dr. Ed Kowlowitz, medical director/owner of the Center for Pain Management

**Question: What are some common signs that someone is abusing pain medicine?**

**Answer:** The first is engaging in high-risk behaviors -- they'll forge prescriptions, trade medications or sell things. Basically, addicts lie. They lie to everybody -- their family, their friends, their physicians.

They put themselves in precarious and dangerous situations. They'll be unfocused, they'll do poorly at work or school. They will socially withdraw or become very depressed. And common side effects of the opioids are that they can slow down breathing, they can become very constipated, sedated or nauseous.

But the cardinal thing to look for... is that (addicts) need more and more. They overuse what they have if they're getting it from physicians, they will do doctor shopping, they will lie about their medical histories, or they won't tell physicians that they're seeing other physicians.

**Q: How can a family member balance a person's need for [pain medicine](#) with the fear that he or she is addicted?**

**A:** You have to look at what is the main problem. Is the main problem a legitimate pain problem that is not being addressed or... that the patient is addicted to medication and doesn't want to let go of their pain because they don't want to stop taking drugs? Addiction is associated with control problems, cravings, compulsions, continued use despite harmful effects.

**Q: What should someone do who's concerned about a friend or family member?**

**A:** I think the family member needs to talk to the patient first and they need to go together to... a specialist. If people are on chronic narcotics, these can be delivered very safely for very long periods of time, as long as they're monitored by a physician who's knowledgeable about this kind of therapy. We see our patients every four weeks face-to-face to see how they're doing.



### About the Doctor

Dr. Ed Kowlowitz is the Owner and Medical Director of the [Center for Pain Management](#) and Center for Special Surgery. A native of New York, he earned his undergraduate degree in biomedical engineering at Columbia University and completed medical school at New York Medical College. After completing his residency at Danbury (CT) Community Hospital he performed both his anesthesiology residency and chronic pain management fellowship at Duke University Medical Center.

Since opening the Center for Pain Management in 1992, Dr. Kowlowitz has held numerous additional positions, including Chief of Anesthesiology at PhysiciansCare Outpatient Surgical Center and Medical Director of the Winona Hospital Pain Management program.

Dr. Kowlowitz employs a multidisciplinary approach to pain management, including assessment and treatment of pain and suffering. He and his colleagues at the Center use [interventional procedures](#), [physical therapy](#), [medication management](#) and [psychological counseling](#), all of which are provided within the walls of his practice, to help patients manage or overcome their conditions.

Dr. Kowlowitz has a particular interest in neuromodulation to treat chronic neuropathic pain and has done extensive research and training with Advanced Neuromodulation Systems to evaluate and improve the safety and effectiveness of such devices. He is one of the leading implanters of [spinal cord stimulators](#) in the state of Indiana and the Midwest.