

TEENS AND



Common questions. Simple answers.

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

- Opioids are drugs made from the opium poppy plant or drugs synthetically created to be chemically similar.
- There are legal opioids like prescription pain relievers. Teens have access to legal prescription opioids such as oxycodone (OxyContin,[®] Percocet[®]), hydrocodone (Vicodin[®]), oxymorphone, codeine, morphine (Kadian,[®] Avinza[®]), and fentanyl right in their home medicine cabinets.
- Some opioids, like heroin, are illegal.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS AND HEROIN?

- Prescription pain relievers and heroin are chemically similar and produce similar effects. People can become addicted to both and overdose on both.
- Some people get addicted to prescription opioids and then switch to heroin.
- In some communities, heroin is cheaper and potentially easier to get than prescription opioids, which is why some people who are addicted to prescription opioids sometimes switch.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY TEEN IS USING OPIOIDS OR OTHER DRUGS?

Behavioral effects:

- Change in grooming like not brushing their hair or teeth or not bathing
- Change in mood
- Lack of interest in grooming or cleanliness
- Bad grades, missing classes, or skipping school
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping habits
- Trouble in their relationships with family or friends

Physical effects:

- Constipation
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dry mouth
- Sleepiness and/or dizziness
- Confusion
- Slowed breathing
- Itching or sweating

HOW DOES THE BODY RESPOND TO OPIOIDS?

Most opioids are prescribed as painkillers. They block pain signals sent from the brain to the body and release a large amount of a chemical called dopamine. This relieves the pain and results in a feeling of being high.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF OPIOID USE?

- Some opioids, like heroin, are very addictive, and even ones prescribed by a health care provider can be highly addictive.
- Some people who begin using prescription opioids move on to heroin or other illegal street drugs.
- Many of these drugs can be cut with fentanyl, an opioid that is 50 times stronger than heroin, which greatly increases the risk of overdose and death.
- Increased tolerance occurs over time, which requires the individual to use greater and greater amounts to achieve the same effect. This makes them more likely to overdose.

HOW DO PEOPLE MISUSE OPIOIDS?

Teens and others misuse opioids by:

- Taking a prescription in ways other than instructed, like taking more than prescribed or taking it more often.
- Getting and using prescription pills from a friend or family member, even if it's for a real medical condition.
- Taking prescription drugs to get high.
- Mixing prescription opioids with alcohol or other drugs.
- Crushing pills or opening capsules, dissolving the powder in water, and injecting the liquid into a vein, or snorting the powder.

HOW DO OPIOID OVERDOSES OCCUR?

- Opioids slow down bodily functions like breathing and heartbeat. Too much can cause a fatal respiratory depression.
- Even if a user doesn't die from the overdose, the lack of oxygen can result in a coma or brain damage.

PREVENTING OVERDOSE

Prevent teens from misusing opioids.

- Families, parents, guardians and other role models have a big influence on teens. Speak to teens about the dangers of opioids and stay actively involved in their lives.
- Talk to a pediatrician or family doctor about other ways to manage pain. Consider using other strategies to manage your own pain so these substances aren't in your house.

Store prescriptions safely.

- Only use prescriptions as prescribed.
- Do not share prescriptions with ANYONE.
- Lock prescriptions up and keep them hidden from anyone you don't want to find them.
- Safely dispose of any unused or expired medications at an approved disposal site.

Know about naloxone.

- Naloxone —also known by its brand name Narcan—is a lifesaving medication that can quickly stop an overdose while it is happening.
- Naloxone is usually administered as a nasal spray.
- You can easily get naloxone at pharmacies and other places. Visit <https://www.helpshere.de.com/Get-Help/Overdose-Prevention> to learn more about naloxone, including how it can be mailed to you.
- Naloxone is often free.
- If you are a parent, guardian, or teacher of teens, you should keep naloxone on hand. It could save a life.



NOW I'VE GOT THE FACTS — WHAT'S NEXT?

You can visit talk2kidsaboutdrugs.com for trusted, factual information for families and educators.

