



Opioid Misuse

Many people are prescribed opiates (painkillers such as Percocet or Vicodin) by their doctors to deal with physical pain. While opiates can be helpful for pain management, they are also extremely addictive. Some people who are not prescribed opiates may become addicted from taking medications recreationally. They may abuse prescription drugs obtained from family members or friends or through illegal means. Regardless how a person obtains opioids, prescribed or not, they are a highly addictive substance.

Facts about opioid misuse:

- Opioid misuse claims more lives per year than motor vehicle accidents.
- An estimated 11.4 million people misused prescription opioids in 2016, according to the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Mortality in the United States.
- In 2016, 2.1 million people had an opioid use disorder (2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Mortality in the United States).
- 130 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose (including prescription and illicit opioids), according to the Centers for Disease Control.
- Around 68% of the more than 70,000 drug overdose deaths in 2017 involved an opioid.



[MindWise.org](https://www.MindWise.org)

Individuals might self-medicate and use opioids as a means of coping with life's problems and find they have become dependent and cannot stop using because of withdrawal symptoms. When a person becomes addicted to opioids it can be very hard to stop using the substance because biologically the reward center in the brain needs more of the substance. Opioid misuse can lead to problems in many areas of a person's life. Job loss, damaged relationships, financial problems, and health issues are common consequences of opioid misuse. In worst cases, opioid misuse results in death.

When Is Opioid Use a Problem?

Opioid use becomes a problem when a person takes more than the prescribed dose, has tried but failed to cut down or stop using opioids, has had a friend or family member express concern about their use of opioids, or had health, social, legal, or financial problems as a result of opioid use. Using larger amounts of the substance over a longer period of time is called tolerance. A person may need more of the opioid to produce a desired effect.

Treatment can help

The first step in seeking help for opioid misuse is to recognize and admit opioid use as a problem.

Behavioral therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can be very effective in treating opioid misuse. A person may need treatment from a detox or drug treatment center.

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) can also prove to be beneficial.

It is important to speak to a doctor or behavioral health professional who specializes in addiction treatment to find the best course of treatment. Support groups and self-help materials can be beneficial to developing a support system for recovery.

RESOURCES

The National Drug Helpline: 1-844-289-0879

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline
800-662-HELP (4357) TTY: 800-487-4889

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, available 24 hours everyday: 1-800-273-8255

National Alliance on Mental Illness: www.nami.org/Learn-More

For additional information on finding help and treatment options, visit www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment.