

The Opioid Crisis: Our Community

Issue 1

What you need to know.

Opioids are most commonly prescribed to treat pain. Hydrocodone (Vicodin), oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet), codeine (often in prescription cough syrups), morphine, and fentanyl are just a few common Opioids.

Opioids are known by different names. Vicodin is often shortened to vikes. Oxy refers to Oxycodone. Lean, loads, and syrup refer to uses of codeine-based cough syrups.

Prescription opioids relieve pain by interacting with pain receptor cells in the brain. Opioids also release dopamine in the brain causing a strong feeling of relaxation and euphoria.

With the best intentions...

Opioids usually come in pill form and are prescribed by doctor to treat severe pain from surgeries, injuries, or cancer. The most common reason to prescribe opioids for youth is sports injuries. Opioids can also be used to treat chronic pain from arthritis, rheumatism, etc. Cough syrups with codeine may be prescribed to relieve respiratory illnesses.

Opioids are relatively safe and effective in reducing pain **WHEN USED AS PRESCRIBED**. However, taking someone else's prescription, or higher than prescribed doses is illegal and is a first sign of dependence or addiction.



NIDA for Teens
<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/prescription-pain-medications-opioids>
Rx Drugs of Abuse – Prevent Med Abuse
Preventmedabuse.org/facts-tools/rx-drugs-of-abuse/

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What should I look for?

Prescription Opioids may cause sleepiness, confusion, nausea, constipation, and slowed or shallow breathing.

The risk of abuse increases when:

- Taking someone else's prescription.
- Taking a larger dose, taking doses more often, or using medications longer than prescribed.
- Crushing and snorting or injecting the drug.
- Taking the prescription to get high.
- Mixing them with alcohol or other drugs.

What is the harm?

Every day in the US, 175 people die from opioid overdose.

In fact, taking just one large dose could cause a person to stop breathing.

What are signs of an overdose?

Signs of a possible overdose include:

- Small pupils
- Slow or shallow breathing
- Blue lips and fingernails
- Cold, damp skin
- Shaking
- Vomiting or gurgling noises
- Extreme sleepiness

What can I do?

People who have overdosed need urgent medical help (call 911 immediately).

Follow doctor's orders.

Look for more information in future issues.