

WHAT ARE OPIATES AND OPIOIDS?

Opiates and opioids are drugs used therapeutically to relieve pain and illicitly for their euphoric effects. Opiates are substances derived directly from some poppy plants. The term opioid refers to opiates as well as to synthetically created substances that mimic the effects of opiates.

Opioids have been used in the form of opium since at least the Neolithic Age. Opium occurs naturally in the latex of certain poppy plants' seed pods. It contains morphine, codeine, and thebaine. Heroin and desomorphine, also known as krokodil, are slightly chemically altered opioids. Semi-synthetic opioids include oxycodone and hydrocodone, and fully synthetic opioids include fentanyl and methadone.

PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

While opioids have significant therapeutic value to patients who suffer from severe pain, they also carry a high risk for addiction. This risk is lessened, but not eliminated, when opioid is medically supervised. The intense pleasurable feelings that come from opioid use can turn users into abusers.

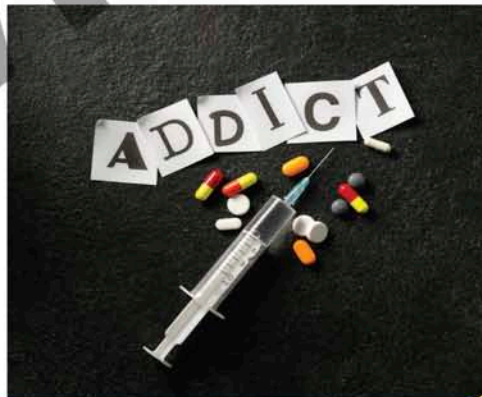
Morphine, hydrocodone, and oxycodone are the most popular among prescription opioid abusers. People may believe that prescription drugs are safe to use regardless of dosage or frequency. In reality, it's alarmingly easy to abuse or overdose on opioids.

ILLEGAL OPIOIDS

The most well-known illegal opioid is heroin. Also known as "H," "smack," or "horse," heroin may come in powder form, ranging in color from white to brown, or as a sticky dark brown to black substance. Users may inject it into their veins, smoke it, or snort it. The initial "rush" that comes with heroin use is so powerful that many users become addicted after trying the drug only once.

OPIOID STATISTICS

- Heroin, morphine, and oxycodone are the most commonly abused opioids.
- In the U.S., over half of the accidental drug deaths are caused by heroin and morphine.
- There are approximately 2 million people in the U.S. who are addicted to prescription opioids.
- Every year, about 150,000 people try heroin for the first time.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Go to www.intheknowzone.com for more information on substance abuse. Increase your knowledge using the information, statistics, images, and links. Test your understanding with a quick quiz.

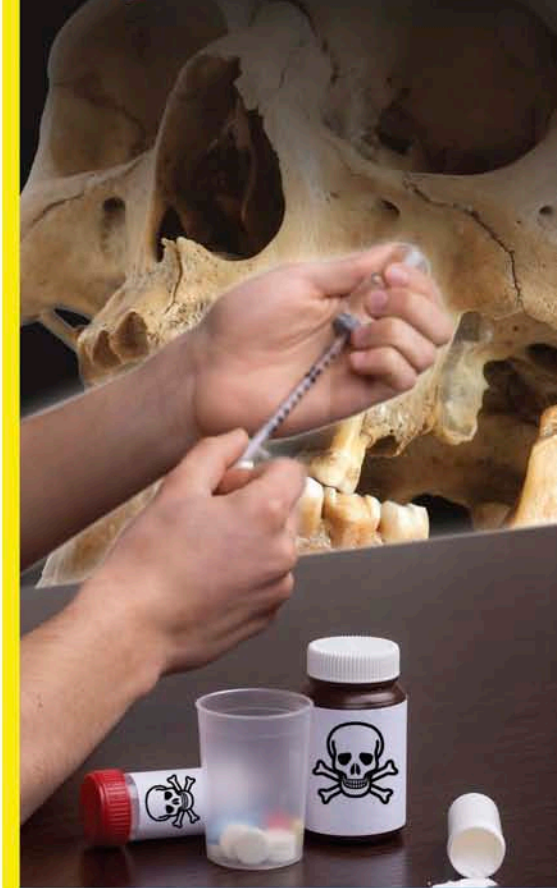
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OPIOIDS

*addiction
guaranteed*



**IN REALITY, IT'S ALARMINGLY EASY TO ABUSE OR
OVERDOSE ON OPIOIDS.**



OPIOID ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCE

Opioid addiction can happen without users even realizing that they have become addicted. Addicts will not be able to control their drug use. They will crave the drug and will be compelled to use the drug, even if they know there will be consequences.

Tolerance to opioids' effects builds quickly. Users will need to take more and more to experience the pain relief or the euphoria they seek. Once drug abusers develop tolerance to the drug, they become dependent on it. Their body becomes so used to the presence of the drug in their system that they will go into withdrawal once they stop taking it.

SIGNS OF OPIOID ABUSE/ADDICTION

- Track/needle marks and wearing long sleeves to cover them
- Lethargy and difficulty moving
- Hanging out with different groups of people
- Poor hygiene
- Excessive sleeping
- Weight gain/loss
- Borrowing money without explaining why

WITHDRAWAL AND DETOX

The withdrawal and detoxification process for an opioid addict should be medically supervised to ensure that person's safety and continued success in recovery. While the withdrawal symptoms are rarely life threatening, they can

be very painful and uncomfortable. Initial withdrawal symptoms usually start about 12 hours after stopping the drug and peak after two to four days. The entire process can last up to two weeks.

In the first 24 hours after drug use stops, individuals will experience anxiety, muscle aches, insomnia, excessive sweating, and restlessness. As the detoxification continues, symptoms will increase in severity, and will include diarrhea, nausea, stomach cramps, chills, vomiting, bone pain, and high blood pressure.

RELAPSE AND OVERDOSE

After completing a traditional drug treatment program, 90 percent of opioid addicts will relapse in the first year. Relapse presents its own set of problems, as an addict's tolerance will have decreased during the detox process. If that addict starts using again at the same level he/she was prior to going through detox, that person may easily overdose.

During an overdose, individuals may lose consciousness. Their pupils will not react to light and their heart rate and breathing will slow down and possibly stop. Their lips and nails will turn blue due to insufficient oxygen in their blood. They may have seizures and muscle spasms. Vomiting and choking are also symptoms of an overdose.

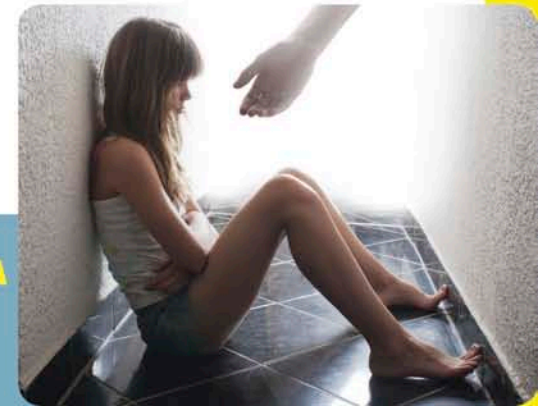
RECOVERY

While success in an opioid treatment program varies depending on the individual, recovery is more likely when multiple approaches are used. Individuals should receive therapy during and after withdrawal. Support groups also provide reinforcement during recovery.

In addition to counseling, replacement therapy provides added benefits. This procedure involves replacing one opioid with a longer acting and less euphoric opioid like methadone or suboxone. In time, it may be possible for an individual to transition to a completely drug-free life.

GETTING HELP

Abusing prescription or illegal opioids will result in long lasting and life-altering consequences. And while dealing with opioid addiction may seem like an insurmountable task, the cycle of addiction can be broken. Dedication, support, counseling, and treatment can make a happy and healthy life a reality.



THE TERRIBLE EFFECTS

After taking an opioid, users will feel instantaneously relaxed. Their limbs might feel heavy, their vision and speech will be impaired, and they will have difficulty coordinating their movements. Opioids depress the nervous system, leading to slowed breathing, and depending on the amount taken, coma or death.

As use turns into abuse, the brain's functioning begins to suffer. Nerves within the brain are damaged, cells stop producing endorphins, and the body becomes unable to stop pain on its own. Long-term users will experience hormonal imbalances in their adrenal glands and thyroid, emotional imbalances, and osteoporosis. Ultimately, users become physically dependent on the opioid.

**THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION
CAN BE BROKEN.**