



Prescribed Opioids: From Prescription to Addiction

Opioids may be prescribed by a healthcare provider for the treatment of pain. When the medicine is misused, abused, or taken for a long period of time, a person can develop a tolerance to the medicine, requiring them to need a higher dose of the drug to get pain relief. Continued misuse and abuse can result in an addiction to opioids.

Statistics from the National Center for Drug Abuse:

- ◆ 9.3 million people abuse prescription opioids.
- ◆ Opioids are the most abused drug.
- ◆ Addiction and overdose from opioids continue to increase.
- ◆ Four out of 5 pharmacy-filled prescriptions are opioids.

Facts About Prescription Opioids:

- ◆ Opioids are effective in treating acute pain from surgery and injuries (i.e.: fractures).
- ◆ Opioids are not as effective for treating chronic pain.
- ◆ The effectiveness of treating acute pain with opioids and the limited treatment options for treating chronic pain has led to a reliance on opioid medicine for the treatment of all pain.
- ◆ The reliance on opioids for pain management has led to drug diversion, misuse, abuse, addiction, overdose, and death.
- ◆ People who develop a tolerance to opioids may experience withdrawal symptoms when not taking the opioid. Withdrawal symptoms and cravings fuel addiction.
- ◆ The rewarding effects of opioids are intensified when the drugs are delivered into the brain quickly. For this reason, opioids are often injected into the vein.

Who Is At Risk of Opioid Addiction?

- ◆ **Addiction does not discriminate.** Anyone who misuses opioid drugs can become addicted. Genetic predisposition, teens, environment, and people with mental illness have an increased risk of addiction. The more risk factors present, the higher the risk of addiction.
 - ◆ **Past or Current Substance Abuse:** The risk of relapse continues to be high due to changes in the brain.
 - ◆ **Teens:** Since the teen brain is still growing, it can more easily change its circuitry with drug use. The front part of the brain (frontal cortex) is underdeveloped, leading to a lack of self-control.
 - ◆ **Untreated Mental illness:** Drugs are used to relieve emotional distress.
 - ◆ **Genetics:** There is a 40-60% genetic risk for addiction.
 - ◆ **Environment:** Living in poverty or a house where drugs are present, hanging out with a drug dealer or friends who use drugs, and peer pressure increase the risk for addiction.



Realities of Drug Addiction

Common Opioid Prescription Medicines:

◆ Hydrocodone (Vicodin) ◆ Morphine (Kadian, Avinza)	◆ Oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet) ◆ Codeine	◆ Oxymorphone (Opana) ◆ Fentanyl
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It's important to watch for behavioral changes when a person is taking prescribed opioids.

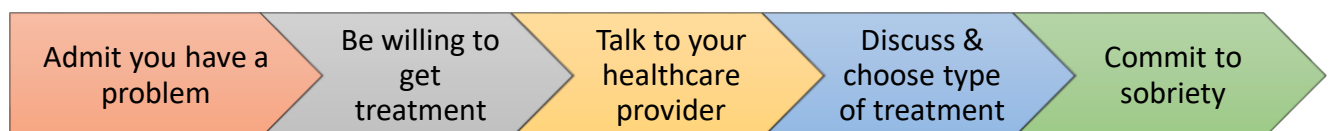


Be aware that when the drug becomes the priority, the person will stop their activities, hanging out with friends or have new friends, and avoid family activities.

Signs of Opioid Abuse:

- ◆ Drowsiness
- ◆ Changes in sleep habits
- ◆ Weight loss
- ◆ Changes in hygiene
- ◆ Frequent flu-like symptoms
- ◆ Pinprick pupils
- ◆ Mood swings
- ◆ Increase tolerance requiring more of the drug
- ◆ Withdrawal symptoms when not using
- ◆ Cravings
- ◆ Unhealthy, risky behavior
- ◆ New financial difficulty

What to Do:



The above steps are important. Without them, it will be very difficult to reach sobriety and the risk of relapse will be high.



Treatment Options:

Medication-assisted treatment: In some cases, healthcare providers may treat a person with medicines to help alleviate withdrawal symptoms, reduce cravings, and control drug use. The three medicines that are typically used to treat an opioid use disorder are methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone.

Inpatient Drug Rehab Program: Some inpatient treatment programs provide detox and treat withdrawal symptoms, otherwise, you may need to detox elsewhere and then transfer to the inpatient drug rehab program. After detox, admission to a comprehensive program is needed. It should offer individual, group, and behavioral therapies and medicine management to help reduce the risk of relapse. If mental illness is driving addiction, it's important to find a program that provides **dual diagnosis** treatment for the mental illness and addiction.

Partial Hospitalization Program: The person lives at home but receives 4-8 hours of therapy a day. This may be an option for someone who needs an intensive but more structured program.

Intensive Outpatient Rehab Program: This program is for people who require more structure and support than an outpatient program. The amount of treatment varies, with about 10-20 hours of therapy weekly. These programs often address a person's psychological, psychiatric, and medical needs.

Outpatient Drug Rehab Program: There are options for continued treatment after discharge from the inpatient program. It is recommended that continued care be provided to reduce the risk of relapse.

Residential/Sober Living: Following treatment for addiction, sober living may be an option. It is a safe, drug free house for those who continue to recover from addiction.



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