



PRESCRIPTION OPIOID EPIDEMIC: KNOW THE FACTS



PRESCRIPTION OPIOID EPIDEMIC:

One of the fastest growing epidemics in the United States today is prescription pain medication misuse. Opioids, a class of narcotic pain medications prescribed by doctors and filled at pharmacies, are a large contributor to this epidemic. Some examples of opioids are oxycodone, hydrocodone, and fentanyl. While opioids are often medically necessary; misuse, abuse, and addiction are becoming wide spread.

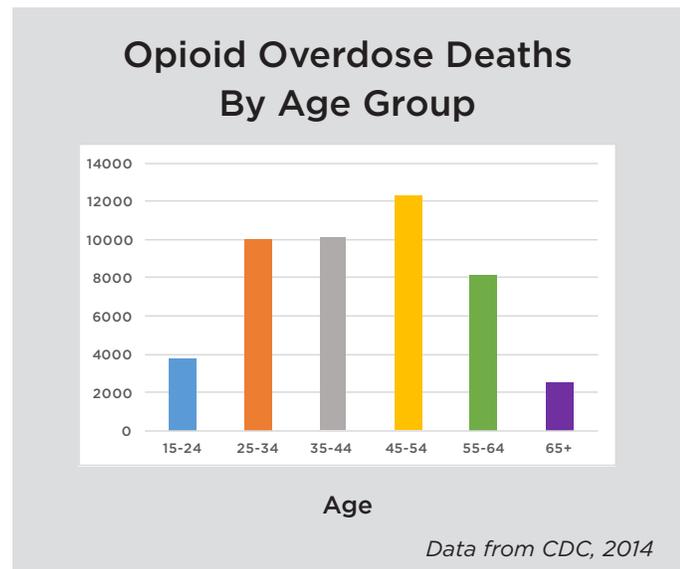
FACTS ABOUT OPIOID ADDICTION IN THE UNITED STATES:

- As of 2016, the estimated death rate due to opioid overdose in the U.S. was 40-52 people a day.
- Prescription opioid misuse can affect all races, ages, economic levels, and genders.
- Over half of people misusing opioid medications report:
 - Obtaining them for free or stealing them from a friend or family member
 - Going to multiple doctors to get multiple prescriptions
 - Filling prescriptions at different pharmacies so that no one will notice how many pills they get each month
- Studies estimate that between 3-19% of people who take prescription pain medications develop an addiction to the pills.

- Risk factors of opioid addiction include previous substance abuse, mental illness, chronic pain, and genetic predisposition.
- Some people think that misusing prescription opioids is safer than “street drugs” because it is a medicine, but that is not true.
- 45% of people who use heroin started with an addiction to prescription opioids.

SIGNS OF ADDICTION:

- Stealing or borrowing pills
- Lying about lost pills to obtain more
- Mood swings—constant irritability
- Forgetting or being distracted
- Stealing money to buy drugs
- Being dishonest to family and friends
- Losing a job or failing in school
- Losing motivation or productivity
- Staying away from home overnight or for several days
- Decreased inhibitions—doing things that they typically would not do
- Puncture marks on hands and arms or wearing long sleeves during hot weather to hide arms
- Appearing sedated or lethargic
- Changes in appetite and often sick with flu-like symptoms



SIGNS OF OVERDOSE:

People who take more opioids than are prescribed are at an increased risk for overdose and death.

Signs of overdose include:

- Slowed or no breathing
- Unconsciousness
- Confusion
- Nervousness
- Pinpoint pupils
- Clammy skin
- Fatigue
- Seizures



HOW TO TALK TO A LOVED ONE ABOUT PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS:

- Talk to children and family members about taking **only** medicine that is prescribed to them and to **never** share medications with others.
- Explain that prescription medications are not safer than street drugs and misusing them can lead to addiction and can be life threatening.
- Explain how accidental overdose can occur:
 - Taking more pills or more frequently than prescribed
 - Mixing pills with alcohol or other medications

AVOIDING ADDICTION AND OVERDOSE:

- Discuss with your physician alternative pain medications or other pain treatments to avoid bringing opioids into your home.
- Ask your physician for pain medications that are **not opioids** when non-prescription pain relievers do not work.
- Naloxone (or Narcan) is a medication that reverses the effects of opioids and is effective in preventing death from an overdose, as does rescue breathing.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if Naloxone is right for you or a family member.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

<http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html>

For questions regarding research included in this brochure and to view our video, please visit:

WWW.AMAALLIANCE.ORG



**AT SIGNS OF OVERDOSE,
IMMEDIATELY CALL 911
and administer
Narcan if available.
Perform rescue breathing
until help arrives.**

SEEKING TREATMENT FOR ADDICTION:

Opioid addiction may be a biological response to misuse of properly prescribed medications. Please talk to your physician.

Possible treatments include:

- Medication
- Behavioral Therapy
- Inpatient or outpatient therapy

SAFE STORAGE AND DISPOSAL OF PAIN MEDICATIONS:

- Keep medications hidden safely out of sight. Lock up prescription pain medication in the home.
- Keep a count of all pills to notice if any are missing.
 - Track pills for loved ones who may have difficulty such as a child, adult with memory problems, or a seriously ill person.
- Dispose of all prescription pain medications when they are no longer needed:
 - Use safe local disposal sites and information found at **www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback**

All material provided in this brochure is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used to replace a consult by a physician, nor the advice of a qualified professional. This brochure was developed as a collaboration between the AMA Alliance and Missouri State University Master of Public Health Program.



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