

What You Need to Know About Youth & Opioids

SO, WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids are chemicals that bind to the opioid receptors in the body to reduce the intensity of pain signals sent from the body to the brain.¹ Prescription opioids, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, oxycodone and morphine, are sometimes prescribed by doctors to treat pain.² Common illicit opioids include heroin and illicitly manufactured fentanyl (IMF).¹ Taking prescription opioids not as directed by a doctor or using illicit opioids is illegal.



HOW ARE OPIOIDS CONSUMED?

Opioids can be swallowed as a pill; sniffed, snorted or smoked as a powder; or injected as a liquid.^{2,3}



WHEN DOES OPIOID USE BECOME OPIOID MISUSE?

Using prescription opioids not as prescribed by a doctor or using someone else's opioid prescription is opioid misuse.²

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF USING OPIOIDS?

- Lung complications, sexual dysfunction among men, irregular menstrual cycles for women, addiction and overdose are all further risks of opioid use.³
- Young people who use opioids have a higher risk of **having condomless sex**, which can lead to **sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies**.⁵
- Using opioids for a long time increases the risk of **liver and kidney disease, heart lining and valve infections and collapsed veins**. It also increases the risk of some mental health conditions, such as **depression or opioid use disorder**.⁴
- Opioid use can increase the risk for **infections such as HIV** for those who inject drugs and **damage nose tissue** for those who sniff or snort.
- Illicit opioids **can be fake or laced with fentanyl**, greatly increasing the risk of **overdose**.

HOW CAN I SPOT AN OPIOID OVERDOSE?

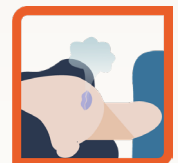
Signs of an opioid overdose include:⁶



loss of consciousness



unresponsiveness to outside stimuli



shallow or depressed breathing



vomiting



pale skin



purple lips and fingertips

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse an opioid overdose – including heroin, fentanyl and prescription opioids – when given in time. It reverses the overdose by blocking the effects of the opioids.⁶ Naloxone is available in every state and usually available at pharmacies without a prescription, from local community naloxone programs or syringe services programs.⁷

- Find [community programs](#) offering naloxone near you.
- Watch a [Narcan training video](#).

REFERENCES

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