

OPIOIDS RUIN LIVES



Youth & Teens Guide

KNOW THE FACTS SO YOU CAN MAKE SMART CHOICES AND BE YOUR BEST YOU!



Never take a pill that wasn't prescribed directly to you.



Never take a pill from a friend.



Never take a pill you bought online or on social media.



Just one pill is dangerous, and one pill can kill.

There is so much talk today about the opioid crisis and how dangerous opioids can be.

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS AND WHY ARE THEY SUCH A PROBLEM?

Basically, they are a group of drugs that block pain signals and causes intense high. They were originally created as a treatment for major pain and when prescribed by a doctor. Opioids can be helpful when used in strict guidance from a doctor, but misuse can often lead to situations where it's difficult to stop taking them. Especially when the doctor stops prescribing them.

The problem is, once you start taking an opioid, your body becomes dependent on them which can progress to you illegally using other opioids like heroin, oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, and morphine.

WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE MISUSE PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS?

You can find yourself misusing prescription opioids for many reasons, including curiosity, peer pressure, and wanting to fit in. You are misusing them when you take a prescription pain medication that wasn't prescribed to you or for something other than a medical purpose.

WHAT IS OPIOID DEPENDENCE?

It's simple, dependence on opioids is when someone cannot stop taking that drug. It can easily occur with long periods of opioid use or when too many opioids are taken. Over time, the body develops a tolerance of opioids and the craving for more takes over to get the same relief or high.

KNOW THE RISKS AND HARMS OF PRESCRIPTION OPIOID MISUSE

It's important to understand the risks. Someone can become dependent on prescription opioids in a quick as five days of use. Misusing prescription opioids or taking them in combination with alcohol or other drugs can also have other major, life-threatening consequences.

RISKS INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- **Allergic reactions**
- **Breathing problems**
- **Coma**
- **Permanent brain damage**
- **DEATH**

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ADDICTION CAN AFFECT ANYONE

- **Addiction does not discriminate. It affects all backgrounds and doesn't care how much money you make, how old you are, or the color of your skin.**
- **Adolescence and young adulthood are a prime time for drug abuse to begin - including tobacco, alcohol, illegal and prescription drugs.**
- **The earlier someone starts using substances, the greater their chances are of developing a drug addiction or Substance Use Disorder (SUD). This is a disease that affects a person's brain and behavior and leads to an inability to control the use of a legal or illegal drug or medicine. Once you're addicted, you may continue using the drug despite the harm it causes.**
- **Drug addiction can start with experimenting with a recreational drug in social situations and the drug use becomes more frequent. For others, particularly with opioids, drug addiction begins when they take prescribed medicines or receive them from others who have prescriptions.**
- **The risk of addiction and how fast someone becomes addicted varies by drug. Some drugs, such as opioid painkillers, have a higher risk and cause addiction quicker than others.**
- **Most teens with drug problems don't want or think they need help, and parents/guardians are frequently blind to the indications their kids may be using drugs - or they dismiss drug use as just a normal part of growing up.**

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

One in four youth under the age of 18 lives in a family where a person abuses alcohol or suffers from alcoholism. Countless others are affected by a family member or caregiver's use of drugs. Many teens are in your situation and it's important to recognize and deal with it. You are not alone!

ADDICTION IS A DISEASE

Addiction to alcohol or drugs is a disease. When one member of a family has this disease, all family members are affected.

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT

If you have a parent/guardian who abuses alcohol or drugs, "It's not your fault!" and you are not alone. You didn't cause it, and you can't make it go away. You need and deserve help for yourself!

SOCIALIZING

You may feel like you need to use drugs or alcohol to overcome insecurities, let your guard down, or feel socially confident. In addition to more obvious risks, this can lead you to feel like substance use is necessary to open up and connect with others. This can lead to addiction very quickly and isn't worth it. You are smarter and stronger than any substance.

YOU CAN BECOME ADDICTED

Young people with alcohol or drug-addicted parents/guardians or caregivers are four times more likely to become addicted if they choose to drink alcohol or use illegal drugs. You can't get addicted if you don't drink or use drugs.

TIPS TO TALK TO YOUR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- **Check in frequently with them to let them know how you're doing.**
- **Choose informal times to talk, such as in the car, during dinner, or watching TV.**
- **Be clear about your feelings and concerns regarding opioids and other drug use.**
- **Spend time together doing social and extracurricular activities.**
- **Let them know you need them and want their help.**
- **Continue talking as you get older.**

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TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Talk with a trusted and caring adult like a teacher, school counselor or nurse, doctor, pastor, a friend's parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle, or neighbor who will listen and help you deal with problems at home. You deserve help, ask for it!

GET INVOLVED

Get involved in activities at school, place of worship, or in the community where you can hang out with other young people, use your strengths, and special talents. While you're having fun, you can learn new skills.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCES TO ANSWER QUESTIONS AND FIND HELP

ALABAMA

Addiction Prevention Coalition

Pursuing freedom and healing from addiction. At all costs. Our vision is to prevent substance abuse and relapse by inspiring and educating people to live with hope, resilience, and purpose. Visit our website or call 205-874-8498.

Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH)

ADMH contracts with community-based entities throughout Alabama to offer outpatient and residential services. If you, or a family member or friend, is struggling with addiction or in need of support. For Substance Abuse help, call 1-844-307-1760. For Mental Illness help, call 1-800-367-0955. [Understanding the Opioid Crisis.](#)

Connect Alabama App

Through the Department of Mental Health, is a behavioral health services and treatment finder application, provides individuals instant access to education, information and services related to substance use, mental health, and prevention. Download on iOS through the app store and for Android devices via Google play.

JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP

Support groups are great places to meet other young people who are struggling with the same problems that you face at home. Talk to your school counselor or social worker to find a local support group. It's important to find caring adults who can help you. Talking with them helps.

NATIONAL

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Prescription opioids can be addictive and dangerous. If you're struggling with prescription opioids, there is hope. Recovery is possible.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's SAMHSA's National Helpline

1-800-662-HELP (4357), or TTY: **1-800-487-4889** is a confidential, free, 24/7, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. If you, or a loved one needs treatment for a substance or mental health-related matter, go to [Find.Treatment.SAMHSA.gov](#) or call the 24/7, national helpline.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Provides support for people in crisis. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people between 10 to 24. Sometimes they feel as though their struggle is being underestimated by their age. But we need to listen to them and let them know help is available. Call or Text 988 – calls are confidential.

LEARN MORE AT:
BESMARTDONTSTART.COM

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