

Opioids 101 for Parents

The Opioid crisis/risks of prescription drug abuse for teens



WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids are a group of drugs that include synthetic opioids like fentanyl, illegal drugs like heroin, and legal prescription pain relievers such as oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, and morphine. Prescription opioid pain medications can be helpful when used correctly under the guidance of a healthcare provider, but misuse can lead to dependence and addiction.

Young people often misunderstand risks of prescription drug abuse. They assume that a drug is safe if it is prescribed by a doctor. In the case of prescription opioids, receiving a legitimate prescription for these drugs during adolescence is associated with a greater risk of future opioid misuse, particularly in young adults who have little to no history of drug use.

Talk to your teen about the risks of prescription opioid misuse. If opioids are prescribed to your teen, talk to your doctor about how to reduce risk of addiction or misuse. *Public Act 17-131 (2017) lowered the limit on opioid prescribing from 7 to 5 days for minors.* Prescribers can prescribe opioids for more than 5 days for minors as long as they document as required in the patient's medical record. Another feature of this legislation is that the prescriber must explain to the patient the reason an opioid is being prescribed and risks associated with opioids.

? Q&A

Q. MY DOCTOR PRESCRIBED ME OPIOIDS. DOESN'T THAT MEAN THEY'RE SAFE?

A. Prescription opioids—when used long term or incorrectly—can cause the brain to become reliant on the drug and are addictive.⁹

Q. IF I USE OPIOIDS, WILL I BECOME ADDICTED?

A. Prescription opioids can cause physical dependence when used as directed or addiction if misused; illegal opioids such as heroin are also highly addictive. People who regularly use prescription opioids or heroin often develop tolerance, which means that they need higher and/or more frequent doses of the drug to get the desired effects.¹⁰



WHY ARE YOUNG PEOPLE MISUSING PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS?

Young people may misuse prescription opioids for many reasons, including curiosity, peer pressure, and wanting to fit in. Another reason teens and young adults may decide to take prescription opioids is because they can be easier to get than other drugs. Studies show that 53 percent of people ages 12 or older who obtained prescription pain medication for nonmedical use obtained them from a friend or relative.



SAMHSA's Talk They Hear You campaign
Talking With Your Teen About Opioids

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Overdose & safe disposal of medications



Naloxone (Narcan) is a medication designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdose. In CT there are regular free community naloxone trainings Email info@thehubct.org for dates and locations.

Public Act 14-61: *An Act Providing Immunity To A Person Who Administers An Opioid Antagonist To Another Person Experiencing An Opioid-Related Drug Overdose* With this law, the person administering naloxone to someone who overdoses is protected from civil liability and criminal prosecution.

The DEA has a campaign called One Pill Can Kill to educate about the danger of counterfeit pills containing Fentanyl. These fake pills can lead to a fatal overdose, even with one pill. Teens often have no idea this can happen. Sharing this with your teen might save a life.

Prescription drug drop boxes are an easy way to safely dispose of unused or expired medications, preventing theft or future misuse.

The Weston Police Department has a drug take back box in the lobby, at 56 Norfield Rd., for 24/7 easy, no-questions-asked disposal.

Directions for Disposing of Prescription Medicines and Over-the-Counter (OTC) Products

