STOP YOUTH OPIOID ABUSE

▶ WHAT IS AN OPIOID?

Opioids, or opiates, are a type of drug with powerful pain-relieving properties. Doctors often prescribe these for severe pain, such as after a surgery or for a root canal. Opioids have many names, including Vicodin, Percocet, OxyContin, codeine, and more.

There are also other opioids that are not prescribed—like heroin or illicit fentanyl.

When prescribed by a doctor, opioids can be used in a responsible way to reduce pain. But because they also affect parts of the brain that control how you feel pleasure, some people may want to take them even when they're not in pain, which can lead down a road to addiction.[1]

▶ I GET IT—OPIOIDS ARE ADDICTIVE. HOW DO I MAKE SURE I DON'T GET ADDICTED?

First off, most people who take prescription opioids do not become addicted or suffer an overdose, but opioids get more risky when they are used for something other than what your doctor prescribes, if they are used more frequently than prescribed, or if they are expired.

Doctors may prescribe opioids after surgery, for broken bones, and even for certain dental procedures. But you don't have to leave the doctor's office without asking questions. Have a conversation with your doctor if you think the pain medicine he or she is prescribing is an opioid. You can ask for alternative treatment for pain or ask for a limited prescription so you don't have pills that you will need to dispose of later.

If you do get a prescription, using the drug exactly as the doctor prescribed, at the exact time your doctor told you to take it (daily, twice daily, etc.) goes a long way toward preventing addiction. You should also stop taking opioids as soon as you can get relief from over-the-counter medicines like aspirin or Tylenol.[2]

▶ WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE EXTRA PILLS AROUND THE HOUSE?

Most important, make sure you are not sharing your prescribed drugs with anyone else, even if others are feeling pain or you think your prescription could help them feel better. Your doctor wrote this prescription for you—don't help someone along the path to addiction.

When you, your doctor, and your parents determine you don't need any more of your prescribed pain medicine, make sure you get rid of it safely. It may sound easy, but don't flush or throw out your pills. Many pharmacies and police stations will destroy any prescription drugs you no longer need or want. You can find the closest one to you on www.justice.gov/savelives

[1]https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/real-teens-ask-what-are-opioids
[2]https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/what-does-it-mean-misuse-opioids

I HAVE A FRIEND WHO I THINK MAY HAVE A PROBLEM. HOW DO I KNOW?

People who develop an addiction might act differently than they used to. They might change their friends, or choose to spend a lot of time alone. They may lose interest in their favorite things, or quickly change between feeling bad and feeling good. Physical signs that someone may be abusing an opioid include drowsiness, small pupils, and slow breathing.[3]

Misusing prescription opioids opens a door to heroin and other street drugs. Nearly 80 percent of people addicted to heroin started first with prescription opioids.[5] It is important to be aware that misusing opioids can lead to other addiction problems.[6]

People with an addiction often can't stop taking drugs on their own; you can make sure they are able to find help. The risk of developing an addiction is higher if their parents abuse drugs. Also if someone in their family is addicted to drugs, that individual needs to be even more cautious to remain safe and healthy.

If you know someone who is using or addicted, encourage him or her to talk to a parent, teacher, coach, or other trusted adult. Your friend may not be ready to talk to someone about their drug use, but you can be prepared to help him or her when they are.

IF SOMEONE IS MISUSING AN OPIOID, YOU CAN ENCOURAGE THEM TO GET HELP. OPIOID MISUSE CAN MEAN A FEW THINGS, INCLUDING:

- Taking an opioid that was prescribed for someone else, even if you're taking it to reduce your own pain

- Taking a higher dose of an opioid than you were prescribed, or taking your medication more often than prescribed

- Taking an opioid—yours or someone else's—to get high[4]

THERE IS A FREE, CONFIDENTIAL, 24/7 INFORMATION SERVICE FOR INDIVIDUALS, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY MEMBERS WHO ARE WORRIED ABOUT A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER. 1-800-662-HELP (4357)[7]

OKAY, WHAT DOES "ADDICTION" ACTUALLY MEAN?

If you take prescription opioids that have not been prescribed to you, take more than your doctor prescribed, or take medicine simply for how it makes you feel, tell your doctor, a parent, or another trusted adult. These are signs that you may have a substance use disorder, and you need professional help. The sooner you get help, the better your chances are for recovery.[8]

Asking for help is the first important step. If you have a good relationship with your parents, you should start there. If you don't want to talk to your parents, find an adult you trust and ask him or her for help. The next step is to go to your doctor.[9]

There are lots of options for treatment. Medicine, along with other supports, can help you fight the addiction. There are lots of people who are willing and trained to help. Work with a trusted adult and your doctor to get the right treatment.

It takes a lot of courage to seek help for a possible drug problem, because there is a lot of hard work ahead. But treatment works, meaning you can recover and get your life back on track.[10]

[3]https://drugabuse.com/library/opiate-abuse/
[4]https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/what-does-it-mean-misuse-opioids
[5]Compton WM, Jones, CM, Baldwin GT. Relationship between nonmedical prescription-opioid use and heroin use. England Journal of Medicine, 2016, 374:154-163.
[6]https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/prescription-pain-medications-opioids
[7]https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline
[8]http://headsup.scholastic.gov/students/prescription-pain-medications-what-you-need-to-know
[9]https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/treatment/what-to-do-if-you-have-problem-drugs-teens-young-adults
[10]https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/treatment/what-to-do-if-you-have-problem-drugs-teens-young-adults

THE WHITE HOUSE