



Risk factors for prescription drug abuse

The majority of people who receive opioid-based prescription medications to manage pain are able to do so safely and effectively. However, since these opioids also impact the reward center in the brain, some people experience a euphoric response making these drugs highly addictive and promoting dependency. Opioid abuse and misuse occurs for a variety of reasons, including: self-medicating, using for reward, and using compulsively because the person is addicted.

Drug overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, edging out car accidents in 2014.

Risk factors

- Past or present addictions to other substances, including alcohol and tobacco
- Family history of substance abuse problems
- Certain pre-existing psychiatric conditions
- Chronic pain with co-occurring substance use disorders and/or mental health disorders
- Exposure to peer pressure or a social environment where there is drug use

- Easier access to prescription drugs, such as having prescription medications in the home medicine cabinet
- Lack of knowledge about prescription drugs and their potential harm
- Younger age, especially the teens or early 20s
- Older age, especially when combining drugs with alcohol

Prevention

- Always follow prescription directions
- Inform healthcare provider about all prescriptions; ask about potential reactions with other drugs
- Do not alter dosage without first discussing it with a healthcare provider
- Safely dispose of unused medication
- Seek help for questions, early identification helps prevent ongoing misuse or abuse

Additional resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The CDC website features a section devoted to opioid information, data and FAQs. In addition, there are guidelines for prescribing opioids for chronic pain to help ensure patients have access to safer treatment options.

[cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/patients.html](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/patients.html)

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

NIDA provides information on commonly abused drugs, the latest science and treatments, trends and statistics to improve individual and public health.

[drugabuse.gov](https://www.drugabuse.gov)

The American Society of Addiction Medicine

A society of physicians aimed at increasing access to addiction treatment. They offer a nationwide directory of addiction medicine professionals.
asam.org

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Find locations for residential, outpatient, and hospital inpatient treatment programs for drug addiction and alcoholism throughout the country.
findtreatment.samhsa.gov or 1-800-662-HELP

The Partnership at Drugfree.org

Provides information and resources on teen drug use and addiction for parents to help them prevent and intervene in their children's drug use or find treatment for a child who needs it.
drugfree.org or 1-855-378-4373

Contact Us

Your program provides access to tools and other resources online or call us directly to speak to a professional counselor who is available everyday and at any time to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

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