

Commonly abused opioid medications

The United States is in the midst of an epidemic of opioid abuse and misuse, with more than 4.5 million people using prescription painkillers every year for nonmedical reasons; an estimated 2 million people dependent on or addicted to prescription pain relievers; and deaths from misuse of prescription narcotics exceeding those from illegal drugs.*

How do opioids work?

Opioid drugs relieve pain by attaching to specific proteins, called opioid receptors, which are found in the brain, spinal cord, gastrointestinal tract, and other organs in the body. When the drugs attach to the receptors, they reduce the perception of pain. Opioid drugs are prescribed to treat a variety of moderate to severe pain symptoms associated with respiratory illness with severe coughing, injuries, trauma, surgery, dental procedures and chronic pain.

What are the side effects?

Opioids can produce drowsiness, mental confusion, nausea, constipation, and, depending upon the dosage taken, they can depress respiration. Some people also experience a euphoric response to opioid medications, since these drugs also affect the brain regions involved in reward.

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pain patients reported misusing
their opioid Rx medicines

*Report: Prescribers, Patients and Pain, Partnership
for Drug-Free Kids, April 29, 2015*

Those who abuse opioids may seek to intensify their experience by taking the drug in ways other than those prescribed. For example, OxyContin is an oral medication used to treat moderate to severe pain through a slow, steady release of the opioid. People who abuse OxyContin may snort or inject it, and increase their risk for serious medical complications, including overdose.

* Source: *Overdoses of prescription opioid pain relievers — United States, 1999–2008. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. 2011;60(43):1487-1492.*



Prescription drugs are commonly abused because they are so addictive

Commonly abused opiates

Drug generic name	Commercial name
Codeine	Empirin with Codeine, Fiorinal with Codeine, Robitussin A-C, Tylenol with Codeine
Fentanyl	Actiq, Duragesic, Sublimaze, Subsys, Abstral, Lazanda
Hydrocodone	Lortab, Vicodin, Lorcet, Zohydro
Hydromorphone	Dilaudid
Mepedridine	Demerol, Meperidine hydrochloride
Morphine	Avinza, Kadian, MS Contin, Roxanol, Duramorph, MSIR
Methadone	Dolophine, Methadose
Oxycodone	OxyContin, Percocet, Percodan, Tylox
Oxymorphone	Opana, Numporphan, Numorphone
Tramadol	Ultram

It can happen to anyone

Opioid medications are intended to relieve pain, however, as the brain becomes used to feeling better, it often takes more and more of the drug to produce the same levels of pain relief and well-being, leading to dangerously high tolerance levels, dependence, and later, addiction.

If you or a loved one is at risk of opioid addiction, it's important to seek help as soon as possible.

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

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

This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.