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Opioids

TCHAT

(Texas Child Health Through Telemedicine)



Opioids

- Opioids, often called “downers”, are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug **heroin**, synthetic opioids such as **fentanyl**, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as **oxycodone, vicodin, codeine, morphine**, and many others.
- When used correctly under a health care provider's direction, prescription pain medicines are helpful. However, misusing prescription opioids risks dependence and addiction.



Dependence and Addiction

- Dependence refers to a physical dependence on a substance. Dependence is characterized by the symptoms of tolerance and withdrawal. While it is possible to have a physical dependence without being addicted, addiction is usually right around the corner.
- Addiction is marked by a change in behavior caused by the biochemical changes in the brain after continued substance abuse. Substance use becomes the main priority of the addicted person, regardless of the harm they may cause to themselves or others. An addiction causes people to act irrationally when they do not have the substance they are addicted to in their system.



Prescription Opioids

- Opioids are prescribed to reduce pain after a major injury or surgery. Physicians prescribe them for severe pain from health conditions like cancer, etc.
- Teens and adults abuse prescription drugs for many reasons, such as: to feel euphoria or get high, to relax or relieve tension, to reduce appetite or increase alertness, to experiment with the mental effects of the substance, to maintain an addiction and prevent withdrawal, to be accepted by peers or to be social, to try to improve concentration and academic or work performance
- Opioid misuse, addiction, and overdoses are serious public health problems in the United States. Opioids can cause side effects such as drowsiness, mental fog, nausea, and constipation. They may also cause slowed breathing, which can lead to overdose deaths.



Heroin

- Heroin is an opioid drug made from morphine, a natural substance taken from the seed pod of the various opium poppy plants. Heroin can be a white or brown powder, or a black sticky substance known as black tar heroin. Other common names for heroin include *big H*, *horse*, *hell dust*, and *smack*.
- People inject, sniff, snort, or smoke heroin.
- Heroin enters the brain rapidly and binds to opioid receptors on cells located in many areas, especially those involved in feelings of pain and pleasure and in controlling heart rate, sleeping, and breathing.



Heroin

- People who use heroin report feeling a "rush" a surge of pleasure, or euphoria. However, there are other common effects, including: dry mouth, warm flushing of the skin, heavy feeling in the arms and legs, nausea and vomiting, severe itching, and clouded mental functioning.
- People who use heroin over the long term may develop: insomnia, collapsed veins for people who inject the drug, damaged tissue inside the nose for people who sniff or snort it, infection of the heart lining and valves, abscesses, constipation and stomach cramping, liver and kidney disease, lung complications, pneumonia, and mental disorders such as depression and antisocial personality disorder.



Fentanyl

- Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 80-100 times stronger than morphine. Pharmaceutical fentanyl was developed for pain management treatment of cancer patients, applied in a patch on the skin. Because of its powerful opioid properties, Fentanyl is also diverted for abuse. Fentanyl is added to heroin to increase its potency, or be disguised as highly potent heroin. Many users believe that they are purchasing heroin and actually don't know that they are purchasing fentanyl – which often results in overdose deaths. Clandestinely-produced fentanyl is primarily manufactured in Mexico.
- Street names: Apace, China Girl, China Town, China White, Dance Fever, Goodfellas, Great Bear, He-Man, Poison, and Tango & Cash
- Fentanyl abuse causes intense short-term high, temporary feelings of euphoria, slowed respiration and reduced blood pressure, nausea, fainting, seizures, and death.



Treatment of Opioid Overdose

- Naloxone is a medication that can treat an opioid overdose when given right away. It works by rapidly binding to opioid receptors and blocking the effects of heroin and other opioid drugs. Sometimes more than one dose may be needed to help a person start breathing again, which is why it's important to get the person to an emergency department or a doctor to receive additional support if needed.
- Naloxone is available as an injectable solution, a handheld auto-injector, and a nasal spray. Friends, family, and others in the community can use the auto-injector and nasal spray versions of naloxone to save someone who is overdosing.
- The rising number of opioid overdose deaths has led to an increase in public health efforts to make naloxone available to at-risk persons and their families, as well as first responders and others in the community. Some states have passed laws that allow pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription from a person's personal doctor.



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Questions