

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

What do you know about opioids? Complete the following quiz. Use the information in the sidebar to help you. Once done, on the back of this sheet, write five new facts you learned about opioids, their uses, misuse, and the opioid crisis in American society.

1. Opioids are:

- medicines that fight the flu
- medicines that provide pain relief
- medicines that strengthen muscles
- not addictive

2. Fentanyl, heroin, and oxycodone are all:

- over-the-counter drugs
- illegal drugs
- derived from cocaine
- forms of opioids

3. Prescription opioids can:

- provide pain relief
- become addictive
- stop working well over time
- all of the above

4. Opioid overdose can cause:

- shallow breathing
- difficulty waking
- small pupils
- all of the above

5. In 2019, opioids were involved in what percent of fatal drug overdoses?

- over 70 %
- over 50%
- over 20%
- less than 10 %

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids are drugs that help reduce pain. Some opioids are medicines that are prescribed by doctors. Others are illegal. Opioids tell the nervous system that pain is not as severe as it would feel without the drug. They were initially used mainly for cancer patients and other patients with severe pain. Now opioids are commonly used for all types of pain, including chronic pain.

COMMON OPIOIDS¹

- Fentanyl:** Originally for cancer patients with severe pain, it can now be made illegally. Fentanyl is especially dangerous because it is 50-100 times stronger than other opioids.
- Oxycodone:** Used for pain from injuries, also now made illegally; very addictive
- Oxymorphone** (also known as: Oxycontin, Percocet, or Roxicodone)
- Hydromorphone** (also known as: Dilaudid)
- Heroin:** A highly addictive illegal opioid
- Morphine**
- Codeine**
- Hydrocodone** (also known as: Vicodin or Lortab)
- Meperidine** (also known as: Demerol)
- Tramadol** (also known as: Ultram)

OPIOIDS AND THE BODY

Opioids were made for pain relief but can cause many side effects. One of the most dangerous impacts is the body's need for more of the opioid over time. This makes opioids addictive, and overdoses can occur. Overdoses cause breathing to slow down, sometimes fatally. People who overdose on opioids may also have small pupils and be difficult to wake. Alcohol makes this worse. Opioids should never be used with alcohol.

If an opioid overdose is suspected, call 911 immediately, and stay with the person until emergency services arrive. For anyone concerned about reporting an overdose, some states have Good Samaritan Laws that protect the person calling 911. Naloxone (Narcan) can also be used to help someone who is overdosing. Check with your community first responders to find out how to access Naloxone if you are worried you may have to help someone who is overdosing.²

OPIOIDS IN THE NEWS

Opioids are a national health crisis. Some areas of the country have a much higher use of opioids compared to other areas. Opioids can be made illegally. The use of illegal opioids has led to a steady increase in addiction and drug deaths. More than 70% of drug overdoses in 2019 involved illegal opioids. In 2020, the rate of fatal overdoses from opioids rose 30%, to more than 90,000 deaths.³

¹ benavistarecovery.com/common-opioid-list/vertavahealth.com/opiates/commonly-abused/
cdc.gov/opioids/basics/prescribed.html
vertavahealth.com/opiates/commonly-abused/

² drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/prescription-opioids
² ncl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/drug-overdose-immunity-good-samaritan-laws.aspx

³ cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm

