

Dear Educator,

Whether young people have heard about the opioid crisis on the news or struggled to stay away from opioids at a party or after a sports injury, opioid use and misuse is a topic that teens need to understand. More than one hundred people die every day from opioid abuse.* Connecting the opioid crisis to students' lives in meaningful ways can help teens make informed decisions. Teaching them how opioids impact the body can help them make life-saving decisions. And alerting them to the warning signs of opioid misuse can empower teens to seek help for themselves or family members and know where to get that help if needed.

Nurses, teachers, parents, and caregivers can support teen opioid awareness with this free educational program from the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired. The program's easy-to-implement standards-based lesson plans, designed for middle and high school students, support language arts, health, and social-emotional learning skills, while complementing NASN resources and school nurse protocols.

We hope that you will share this program with other nurses and teachers. Please let us know your thoughts on this program at [yomiclassroom.com/feedback-opioids](https://www.yomiclassroom.com/feedback-opioids). We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Dominic Kinsley, PhD
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired

*[odc.gov/opioids/basics/epidemic.html](https://www.odc.gov/opioids/basics/epidemic.html)



Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005 or by email at feedback@yomiclassroom.com.



National
Association of
School Nurses

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THE OPIOID CRISIS

HELP TEENS MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL NURSES

The mission of the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) is to optimize student health and learning by advancing the practice of school nursing. School nurses are the leaders who bridge health care and education, provide care coordination, advocate for quality student-centered care, and collaborate to design policies and protocols that allow individuals and communities to develop their full potential. They are key stakeholders in children's health and well-being in the school community.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Middle and high school students

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Visit [yomiclassroom.com/opioids](https://www.yomiclassroom.com/opioids) for:

- This 2-page teacher's guide
- Three reproducible student activity sheets
- A reproducible parent/caregiver letter
- Educational standards

WHAT STUDENTS WILL LEARN WITH THESE ACTIVITIES

The activities are designed to raise student awareness about:

- Opioid use, misuse, and addiction
- The risks and effects of misusing opioids
- How the opioid crisis may impact their own lives or community
- How to make positive decisions and resist negative peer pressure
- How to get help for themselves, a friend, or family member and to feel comfortable seeking that help from their school nurse and other adults in their lives

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAM

Make photocopies of the three activity sheets to use in class and share the parent/caregiver take-home letter with families. In class, read the instructions and background for each activity. For Activity Two, research local and state resources for opioid addiction and treatment. Access to internet resources and media will enhance Activity 3 but is not required.

ACTIVITY 1 WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

To launch the unit, students take a quiz to help assess their knowledge and misconceptions about opioids, including heroin and fentanyl. This multiple-choice quiz features questions designed to gauge students' understanding about what opioids are, how and when they are used, why they are addictive, how opioid



addiction impacts the body, and how and why opioid addiction is a national health problem. Allow students to work alone or with a partner to complete the quiz and identify five facts that they learned. Encourage them to use the sidebar facts to find the answers and new information. Review the answers with the class, discussing with students what they already know about opioids and opioid addiction, what they have learned from the quiz, and any misconceptions they may have had.

Answers: 1. B, 2. D, 3. D, 4. D, 5. A

Extension: Have students work in teams to research and report facts about the impact of opioid misuse and addiction in your state/community, including statistics and stories in the news about addiction and prevention measures. State-specific information can be found at: drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/opioids/opioid-summaries-by-state

ACTIVITY 2 THE EFFECTS OF OPIOIDS

As a follow-up to the quiz, this activity provides students with more detailed background information about the risks and health effects of opioid use — both when used as prescribed and intended, and when misused. Explain to students that more than one hundred people die every day from opioid abuse.¹ Understanding how opioids impact the body can help students make life-saving decisions. Students are also provided with steps on seeking help if they are misusing or have a dependence on opioids or have a friend or family member about whom they are concerned.

Part 1 focuses on the addictive properties of opioids and the physiological effect they have on the body, which can lead to overdose and death. Students connect the side effects to the part of the human body that is impacted. Use their work to have a class discussion about opioids and their risks.

Answers: brain: confusion, sleepiness, dizziness; **heart:** slowed breathing and heart rate; **stomach/intestines:** constipation, nausea, vomiting; **mouth:** dry mouth; **overall body:** sweating, itching, reduced strength and energy.

For Part 2, help students brainstorm people and places that can provide support if they have questions or concerns about opioids. Start with school resources like the school nurse or counselor and include health hotlines and other local resources as well. Make sure each student has a chain of support for any further questions or help they may need.

Extension: Ask students to work in groups to brainstorm refusal skills plans for getting out of dangerous or tempting environments where opioids are offered. The scenarios listed below for Activity 3 can be used to prompt discussion, or the class can brainstorm similar situations. Have teams act out each situation for the whole class.

ACTIVITY 3 BE OPIOID AWARE

Most adults who have a substance abuse disorder started using drugs as teenagers.² Young people with substance abuse disorders have an increased risk of mental and physical illness later in life.³ As a culminating activity, students will create a PSA poster, skit, video, or social media post to help raise awareness about opioid addiction and prevention and how to get help to ensure a healthy future. Students might choose to raise awareness about the health consequences of opioid misuse, provide prevention skills, or create a message to help teens in need get help for themselves or others struggling with opioid addiction. Direct students to <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/> for immediate help for substance abuse treatment and support.

Divide students into groups to create their PSAs. Talk through the notes about targeting an audience and the importance of avoiding misinformation. Access to the internet can enhance this activity but is not required. Students can also develop their PSAs with the information provided in previous activities. Check out these YouTube videos for ideas and inspiration:

youtu.be/7n4NBkxg2RQ (Handwashing PSA)

youtu.be/6fmhLcYSn-Y (Drug Abuse in Teens PSA)

youtu.be/4lzw5q8DRNw (Preventing Opioid Abuse in Teens)

Possible situations for the PSAs could include:

- A senior who is a star soccer player sustains a serious injury on the field and is prescribed an opioid pain reliever.
- A student who has been stealing opioids from his/her mother's prescription and is concerned that he/she cannot stop.
- A student who is concerned that her/his older sister has been taking opioids and knows he/she is the only one in the family who is aware of the situation.
- A student is concerned for his/her friend whose parent has become abusive and/or absent due to what is perceived to be an opioid habit.
- A student realizes his/her friend's opioid misuse has spun out of control and is worried about where the friend is getting money to support the habit.

Extension: Encourage students to share completed projects through various media. Students might also present their final projects to younger classes, if appropriate. Examples of social media posts are available at cdc.gov/rxawareness/resources/twitter.html.

RESOURCES

National Association of School Nurses: NASN.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/opioids/basics

Drug Enforcement Administration: getsmartaboutdrugs.gov

Young Minds Inspired: ymiclassroom.com/opioid

¹ cdc.gov/opioids/basics/epidemic.html

^{2,3} cdc.gov/healthyyouth/substance-use/index.htm



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.

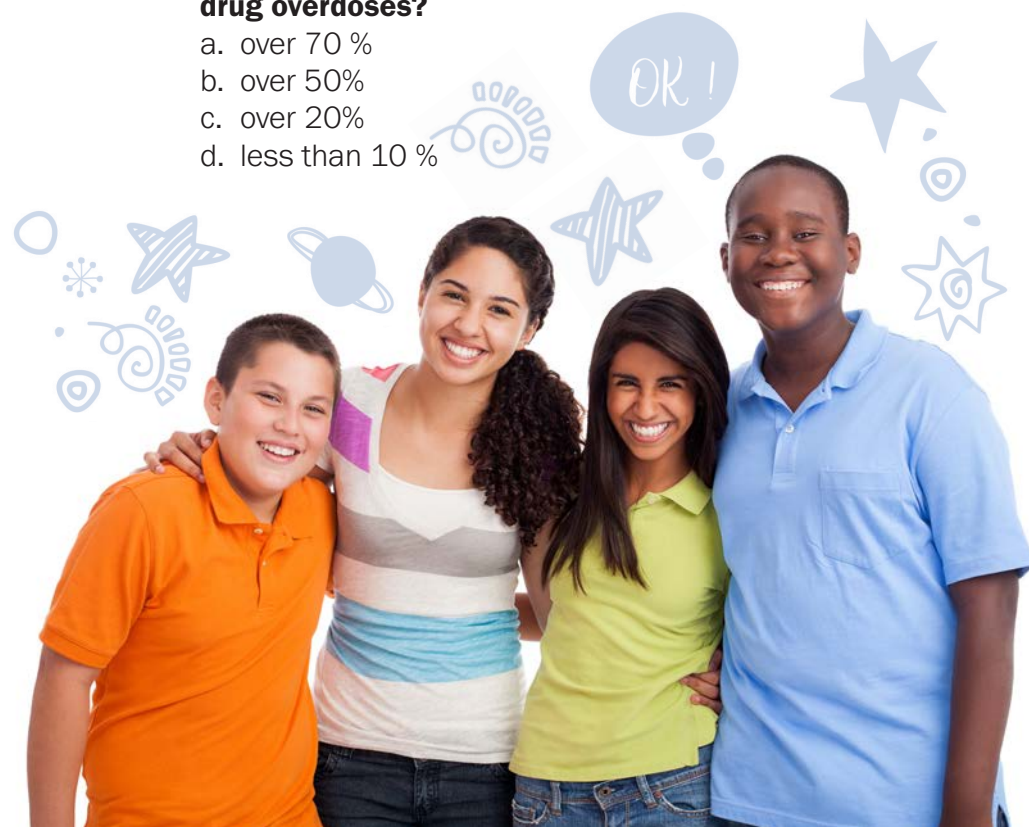
If an opioid overdose is suspected, call 911 immediately, and stay with the person until emergency services arrive. For anyone concerned about reporting an overdose, some states have Good Samaritan Laws that protect the person calling 911. Naloxone (Narcan) can also be used to help someone who is overdosing. 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
³ ncl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/drug-overdose-immunity-good-samaritan-laws.aspx
³ cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm



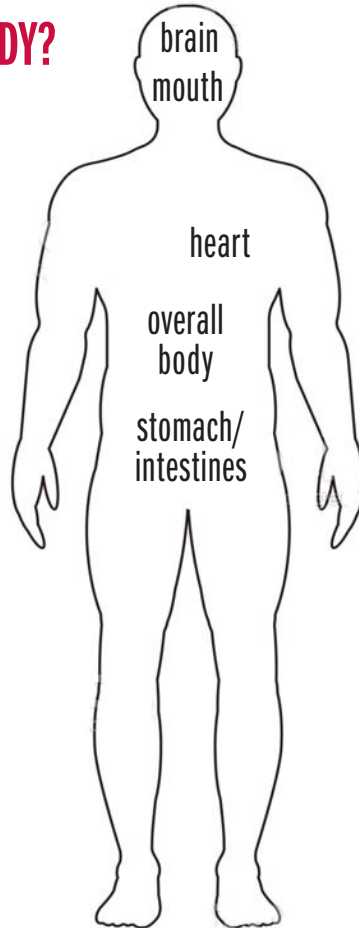
THE EFFECTS OF OPIOIDS

PART 1

Even when used correctly, as prescribed by a doctor, long-term opioid use can be hard on the body. When opioids are misused or abused, the negative impacts can become even greater and can lead to death. Read the list of side effects of long-term opioid use. Draw a line from each side effect to the part of the body that would be impacted.

WHERE DO OPIOIDS IMPACT THE BODY?

- constipation
- nausea
- dry mouth
- confusion
- sleepiness
- dizziness
- itching
- sweating
- vomiting
- reduced strength and energy
- slowed breathing and heart rate



OPIOID DEPENDENCE DANGERS

- Drug tolerance**
 As the body gets used to the drug, it might require taking more of the drug for the same pain relief over time.
- Physical dependence**
 The body develops a need for the drug, which causes symptoms of withdrawal when the medication is stopped.
- Withdrawal symptoms**
 People trying to quit using opioids can also experience severe symptoms that require medical assistance. It's not pretty. Symptoms include bone and muscle pain, cold flashes, uncontrollable leg movements, diarrhea, and vomiting.*

PART 2

Opioids are easy to misuse, and misuse can easily become a powerful, dangerous addiction. *Addiction* is marked by a change in behavior caused by biochemical changes in the brain after continued substance abuse. *Dependence* refers to a physical dependence on a substance.

Who can you turn to if opioids or other drugs become a problem for you or someone you love?

Fill in this chain of support with people, phone numbers, and websites that can help you. Start with your school nurse, teachers, or counselors. Also check for local or state health department hotlines or programs to help with quitting like Nar-anon or al-anon/alateen programs that might be available. Remember, if you need help, keep asking until you get the help you need.

1-800-662-HELP (4357)
 24/7, 365 days a year help
 in English and Spanish from
 the US Substance Abuse
 and Mental Health Services
 Administration Hotline

* drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/prescription-opioids

BE OPIOID AWARE!

Most adults who meet the criteria for having a substance abuse disorder started using drugs as teenagers.* Teens who misuse drugs have a higher risk for mental health illness, physical health struggles, and addiction.* Help support healthy lives and fight addiction and drug abuse with a PSA (Public Service Announcement) encouraging teenagers to stay away from opioids and offering help to those who need it. Use the following guide to help you.

GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

- Who are you trying to reach?
- What will catch their eyes/ears?
- What will keep them watching/listening?

FIGHT MISINFORMATION

- Are your facts correct?
- Can your facts be backed up by at least two sources?
- How trustworthy are your sources?

CREATE YOUR PSA PLAN

Answer the questions below to start planning your PSA. Then use your creativity to develop your ideas.



- Message and facts you want to share: _____

- Audience you want to reach: _____

- How you will catch the attention of your audience (visuals, word choice, music, etc.)? _____

- What format will you use for your PSA? Will you create a poster, skit, video, or social media post?

HOW DID WE DO?

A rubric is a way for you to know if you have completed the assignment. Check your work with this rubric and make sure you have included all the elements.

Be Opioid Aware PSA	Student Self-Evaluation
PSA addresses opioid abuse, misuse, or finding help.	
PSA is crafted for a specific audience.	
Facts are included and sources noted.	
PSA is creative and attention catching.	

*cdc.gov/healthyouth/substance-use/index.htm.

BE OPIOID AWARE!

Dear Families,

Opioid use and misuse are topics that teens and families need to understand. More than one hundred people die every day from opioid abuse.* And opioids can be hard on the body in other ways. Connecting to your teens and providing them with a safe place to ask questions and get help is the best way to support them as they confront this public health crisis.

At school, your teen has been learning about opioid use with a program from the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired. The program empowers teens to seek help for themselves and others with tips on where they can get help. Talk with your teen about what they have learned, and try some of these activities at home:

- Sometimes it can be hard for teens to talk to parents. Together, brainstorm other adults whom you don't mind your teen reaching out to if they need to talk but are nervous telling you. You might also visit these websites for tips on talking with your teen about drugs:
 - teens.drugabuse.gov/parents
 - samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you/parent-resources/keep-kids-safe-brochures
 - getsmartaboutdrugs.gov
- Create a signal or code word that your teen can text or share with you if they need to be picked up from a party or situation, no questions asked.
- Drug abuse can lead to mental health problems, and mental health struggles can make pain-relieving drugs more attractive. Talk with your teen about other ways to get help with big feelings that are overwhelming. If you need ideas, talk to a school nurse or counselor. Confidential recovery programs are also available:
 - nar-anon.org
 - al-anon.org
 - al-anon.org/newcomers/teen-corner-alateen
- Check in with your child a few times a week during mealtime or some other time when you have each other's full attention. The more relaxed time spent together, the easier it is for teens to open up.
- Plan family activities that encourage healthy stress relief. Go on outdoor walks, relax together with a favorite television show, cook a healthy meal together, or spend time with your teen in a hobby they enjoy.
- Support your teen in participating in positive social activities like clubs, sports, or community service.

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* cdc.gov/opioids/basics/epidemic.html

