



The Truth About Opioids

What are Opioids?

Opioids are drugs that block pain signals from reaching our brain. They can also change our mental state making us feel happy, relaxed, sleepy, or confused.

Doctors prescribe opioid medications to help people cope with pain, whether the pain is from something like surgery or a medical condition, like cancer.

Although prescription opioids may be useful for a short time, opioids can be addictive.

Opioid medications that doctors prescribe include:

- Morphine
- Codeine
- Buprenorphine
- Hydrocodone (Vicodin)
- Oxycodone (OxyContin and Percocet)
- Fentanyl

Some opioids, like heroin, are illegal and are not used to treat medical conditions.



How Do People Become Addicted to Opioids?

Opioid addiction is a brain disease. Opioids change the way our brain works and the way we think. One of the first brain changes that occurs is that opioids hijack the part of our brain that controls our cravings.

People often start to misuse prescription opioids by taking them:

- more often
- in larger amounts
- for reasons they were not prescribed for



**Tribal Opioid
RESPONSE**
Healing our Nations Together



NPAIHB
Indian Leadership for Indian Health

Opioid Use Disorder

When someone's opioid misuse causes them to have health issues or problems at work, school, or home, they have an opioid use disorder.

Opioid use disorder is a common medical condition that people can recover from.

Signs Someone May Have an Opioid Use Disorder

- Taking opioids in larger amounts than the doctor prescribed
- Taking opioids more often than the doctor prescribed
- Not able to control opioid use
- Not able to quit using opioids
- Having cravings to take opioids
- Not able to participate in normal work, home, or school responsibilities
- Spending a lot of time trying to get, use, or recover from taking opioids
- Needing more opioids to experience the same relief as before
- Experiencing opioid withdrawal symptoms (like diarrhea, sweating, shakiness, and moodiness) when the opioid wears off

Getting Help

If you are worried that you or someone you love might have a problem, you are not alone. Fortunately there are many treatment options and people that can help.

- Step 1:** Make an appointment at your local clinic or IHS facility, because the only person who can diagnose you with having an opioid use disorder is a health care provider.
- Step 2:** Work with your health care provider to determine which treatments are right for you.
Talking with a behavioral health counselor can help you change behaviors related to opioid use.

Taking certain medications can decrease cravings, stop withdrawal symptoms, and help restore balance to your brain and allow it to heal.

Research shows that taking medications and seeing a behavioral health counselor at the same time is best for people with opioid use disorder.

- Step 3:** Let friends and family know. Recovering from an opioid use disorder can be a life long journey. Walking the road to recovery can be a bumpy path with many ups and downs, but having a strong support system can help.

There is Hope

We can heal our communities through educating ourselves and others, supporting each other, and seeking help when we need it.



Text 'OPIOIDS' to 97779 to receive videos, quizzes, facts, and more to grow your knowledge about opioids.



Visit the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board's website at www.npaihb.org/opioid to learn more about treatments, reversing an overdose, and other important topics.

