



12 Dragons Health

## What are some of the "Pathways to Safer Opioid Use"? or What are the side effects of overdose on narcotic prescription medications?



The name "opioids" refers to substances that can interact with opioid receptors in the brain, including substances derived from poppy seeds as well as semi- and synthetic substances with comparable capabilities. Opioids are frequently used to alleviate pain because of their analgesic and sedative properties. Opioid medicines such as methadone and buprenorphine are used for the maintenance treatment of opioid dependence. After intake, opioids can cause euphoria, which is one of the main reasons why they are taken for non-medical reasons. Opioids include heroin, morphine, codeine, fentanyl, methadone, tramadol, and other similar substances. Due to their pharmacological effects, they can cause difficulties with breathing, and opioid overdose can lead to death.

Only if it's been prescribed by a doctor, is it okay to consume opioids. Once you and your provider decide that the use of opioids is crucial for you, you need to understand certain things like

- How to take the medicine - how much and how often
- How long you will need to take the medicine
- What the possible side effects are
- How you should stop the medicines when you no longer need them. If you have been taking opioids for a while, it can be dangerous to just stop suddenly. You may need to get off the medicines slowly.
- What the warning signs of addiction are, so you can watch for them?

They include

- Regularly taking more medicine than you are supposed to
- Taking someone else's opioids
- Taking the medicine to get high
- Mood swings, depression, and/or anxiety
- Needing too much or too little sleep
- Trouble making decisions
- Feeling high or sedated

One should also take the following steps to ensure safe consumption of the drug.

- Take your medicine exactly as prescribed - do not take extra doses
- Check the instructions every time you take a dose
- Do not break, chew, crush, or dissolve opioid pills
- Opioids can cause drowsiness. Do not drive or use any machinery that may injure you, especially when you first start the medicine.
- Contact your provider if you have side effects
- If you can, use the same pharmacy for all your medicines. The pharmacy's computer system will alert the pharmacist if you are taking two or more medicines that could cause a dangerous interaction.

Because opioids affect the area of the brain that controls respiration, using them can result in death. Three signs and symptoms, when combined, can indicate an opioid overdose

- pinpoint pupils;
- unconsciousness; and
- difficulties with breathing.

About 500 000 deaths worldwide are directly related to drug usage. Overdoses account for more than 30% of these deaths, which have an opioid connection in excess of 70%. Approximately 115 000 individuals died in 2017 from opioid overdoses, according to estimates from the WHO. Opioid overdoses that do not result in death are much more frequent than overdoses that do.

Citation: <https://medlineplus.gov/safeopioiduse.html>

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