

Opioid 101



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A national crisis

You've no doubt heard that there's a national opioid epidemic, affecting people of all ages and income levels. Someone you know — a friend, a family member or even a coworker — might be misusing, abusing or addicted to prescription painkillers.

What's an opioid?

Opioids are a class of drugs that include pain medications available legally by prescription, such as hydrocodone and oxycodone. This also includes synthetic opioids such as fentanyl and the illegal drug, heroin.

Opioid overdoses **increased 30 percent** from July 2016 through September 2017.

Each day, more than **1,000 people** are treated in the ER for misusing prescription pain medication.

On average, **115 Americans die** every day from opioid overdoses.



On an average day in the U.S., more than **650,000** opioid prescriptions are dispensed.

Why are opioid pain medications prescribed?

Opioid pain medications are commonly prescribed for severe pain, often after surgery, and are generally safe when taken for a short time and as prescribed by a doctor.

What can you do to prevent opioid misuse?

There are several ways to help reduce exposure to opioids and prevent misuse.

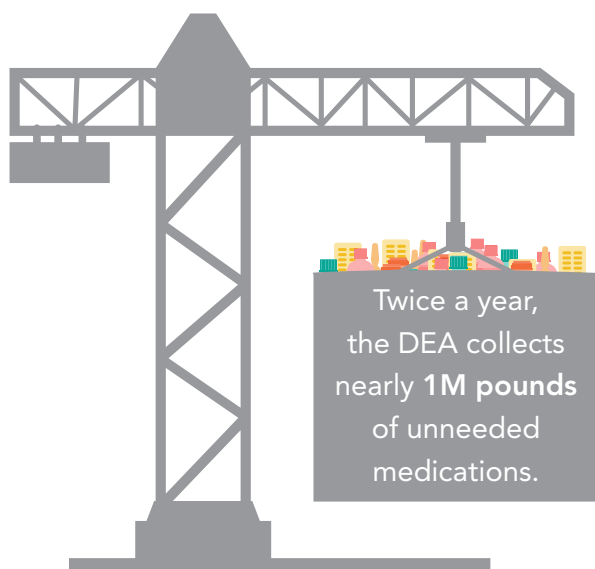
Work with your doctor and caregivers

- If you're prescribed opioids for pain, work with your doctor to create a plan to manage your pain and make the best decision for you. Follow up regularly with your doctor.
- Always follow the instructions you get with your medication. Many people don't need to take all of the pain medication prescribed. If you have questions or are unsure of how to take your medication, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Take and store opioids properly

- Never take opioids in greater amounts or more often than prescribed. Never sell or share prescriptions.
- Store your prescriptions in a secure place, out of reach of others, such as children, family, friends and visitors.

Make sure unused drugs are disposed of properly. This reduces the chance that others may accidentally take or intentionally misuse the unneeded medicine.



Get help

If you or someone close to you need help for a substance use disorder, talk to your doctor or call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP or go to SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator at [findtreatment.samhsa.gov/](https://www.samhsa.gov/findtreatment).

Sources: Centers for Disease Control, National Institute on Drug Abuse

Common opioids

Codeine

Fentanyl (Duragesic®)

Hydrocodone/acetaminophen
(Vicodin®, Norco®)

Methadone

Morphine (Kadian®,
MS Contin®)

Oxycodone
(OxyContin®, Percocet®)

Below are some ways to get rid of expired, unwanted or unused medicines. These services are free and anonymous. You may also drop off unused pet medicines.

- Medicine take-back programs are one way to safely dispose of most types of unneeded medicines. Learn more at [takebackday.dea.gov/](https://www.takebackday.dea.gov/).
- Many state police posts across the country allow residents to safely and anonymously drop off expired, unwanted, or unused prescription drugs.
- Some pharmacies and hospitals may also accept unused or expired medications.