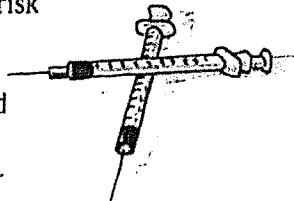


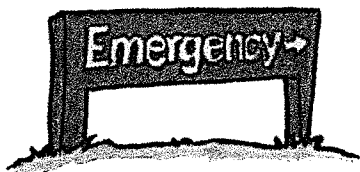
## Prescription opioid addiction increases risk of heroin use.

- People who become addicted to opioids may do whatever it takes to get the drug. The person may go to more than one doctor, or use someone else's drugs. They may buy them illegally.
- If the person cannot get prescription opioids, they may turn to heroin. A prior prescription-opioid addiction is the highest risk factor for heroin use.
- Heroin use and overdose are a major problem.



## An opioid overdose is a medical emergency.

- If you suspect someone has overdosed, call 911 right away.
- Naloxone is a medicine that can reverse an opioid overdose.
- If you have naloxone, administer according to directions.
- If someone you know is misusing prescription opioids or heroin, talk to a doctor or pharmacist. Ask about having naloxone on hand, just in case. It may save a life!



Opioid addiction and overdose are a big problem. Misuse of opioids is a leading cause of accidental death.

Everyone needs to know about the risks of opioids. To learn more, visit [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov) or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

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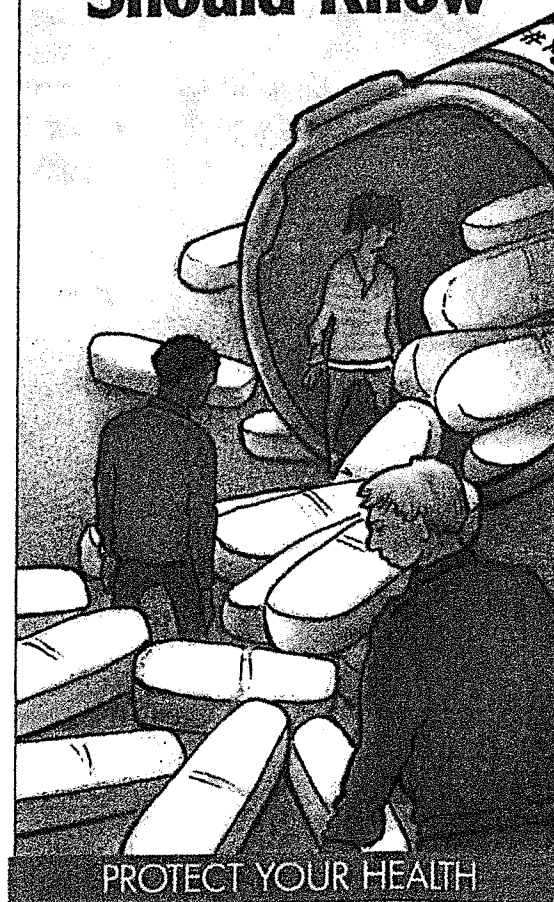
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Rx PAINKILLERS AND HEROIN

# The Risks of Opioids

## What Everyone Should Know



PROTECT YOUR HEALTH

Opioids are a class of drug that includes prescription painkillers and heroin. Opioids are very addictive, and can be deadly. Everyone needs to know the risks of using or misusing opioid drugs.

### What are opioids?



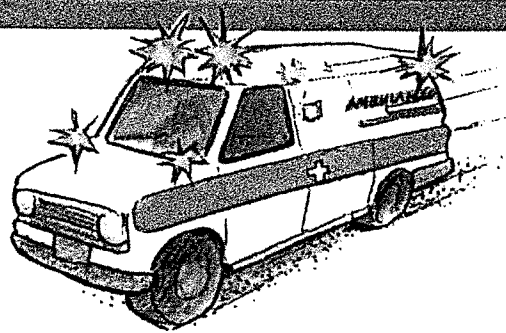
■ Prescription opioids are some of the most commonly prescribed drugs. They help ease short-term pain after a surgery, accident or illness.

- Heroin is also an opioid drug. Heroin is illegal. A doctor never prescribes heroin.
- Misuse of opioid drugs is a leading cause of accidental death in the United States.



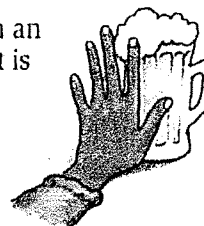
Common prescription opioids include: codeine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, morphine and oxycodone.

Common brand names include: Vicodin, Demerol, OxyContin, Norco and Percocet.



### Mixing other drugs or alcohol with opioids can be deadly.

- Taking an opioid together with an alcoholic drink is dangerous. It is also very dangerous to mix opioids with antihistamines, sleeping pills or sedatives, such as Xanax, Librium, Tranxene, Valium or Ativan.
- Mixing opioids with alcohol or other drugs can slow down or stop your breathing and your heart.



### Overdose and addiction are real risks.

- If you take prescription opioids over time, you can develop a tolerance. This means you will need to take more (higher doses) to feel the same effect.
- This creates a risk for overdose.
  - Opioid drugs are very addictive. They change how your brain works. The longer you take an opioid, the higher your risk of addiction.
  - Addiction is not a lack of willpower. It can happen to anyone.



### Opioids have other risks.

- Even used for a short time, opioids can cause constipation. Or, you may feel nauseated, lightheaded and have fuzzy thinking.
- Long-term use of opioids can change a woman's menstrual cycle and affect a man's ability to get an erection.
- Opioid use during pregnancy can affect the baby. Pregnant women should only use opioids under a doctor's care.



### If you are prescribed an opioid medication:

- Take exactly as directed.
- Never take higher doses. Never take a drug prescribed for another person.
- Ask your doctor how your use will be monitored, to prevent addiction.
- Don't drive or operate machinery.
- Put opioids in a locked drawer or cabinet to prevent misuse by others.
- Ask your local pharmacist about how to safely dispose of unused or expired medications.

