



## TIPS FOR TEENS: THE TRUTH ABOUT OPIOIDS



**So, what are opioids?** Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, morphine, and many others.

**What are your peers calling these drugs?** O.C., Oxy, Percs, Vike, M, Monkey, White Stuff, Lean, School Boy, Sizzurp, Purple Drank, Loads, and much more.

## GET THE FACTS

**Opioids affect your brain.** Opioids affect both the spinal cord and brain to reduce the intensity of pain-signal perception as well as brain areas that control emotion. They can also affect the brain to cause euphoria or "high."

**Opioids affect your body.** Opioids slow down the actions of the body, such as breathing and heartbeat. Even a single dose of an opioid can cause severe respiratory depression (slowing or stopping of breathing), which can be fatal; taking opioids with alcohol or sedatives increases this risk.

**Opioids are addictive.** Even though heroin is highly addictive, more people struggle with addiction to prescription pain relievers. Many young people who inject heroin report misuse of prescription opioids before starting to use heroin.

**Opioids can kill you.** Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, with 68,690 drug overdose deaths last year. More than 46,000 of those deaths involved opioids.



## KNOW THE SIGNS

How can you tell if a friend is using opioids?

Side effects of opioids use can include:

- Constipation, nausea, vomiting, and dry mouth
- Sleepiness and dizziness
- Confusion
- Decreased breathing
- Itching and sweating

Behavior signs and symptoms of opioid addiction can include:

- A change in peer group
- Carelessness with grooming
- Decline in academic performance
- Missing classes or skipping school
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Deteriorating relationships with friends

## BEFORE YOU RISK IT!

**Know the law.** Heroin is illegal and addictive. If you are caught with prescription opioids that are not yours, you can be imprisoned, fined, or both

**Know the risks.** Using opioids repeatedly can lead to a higher tolerance. Other risks can include addiction and death.

**Look around you:** A recent study found that 38.5 percent of people who misused prescription pain relievers got them from a friend or relative for free. 34.6 percent were prescribed the medication by a doctor

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP SOMEONE WHO IS USING OPIOIDS?

**Be a friend. Save a life.**

Encourage your friend to stop using or seek help from a parent, teacher or other caring adult.

For 24/7 free and confidential information and treatment referrals in English and Spanish, call SAMHSA's National Helpline at: **1-800-662-HELP**

