

CAUSES OF OPIOID ADDICTION

Opioids are pain-relieving drugs for moderate to severe pain. Examples are codeine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, methadone, morphine, and oxycodone. Heroin is an example of a non-prescription opioid. They are highly addictive, so a patient may start to abuse them without realizing it.

- Someone may seek out or use opioids in a way that isn't prescribed in order to "check out" from dealing with strong emotions or mental health issues.
- They are also used recreationally because they can lead to euphoria or relaxation.
- It is unknown why some people become addicted when prescribed opioids while others don't. It's likely because of a combination of genetic and environmental factors.
- Risk factors: history of substance abuse, mental health disorders, childhood abuse/neglect, traits like impulsivity and sensation-seeking, living in poverty, surrounding oneself with others who abuse substances.

EFFECTS/SIGNS

The signs of opioid abuse vary depending on the type of opioid, duration of abuse, and the person's overall mental and physical health before/during abuse.

- Signs someone may be abusing: regular visits to the doctor for new prescriptions, decreased school/work performance, loss of interest in their usual activities, slowed thoughts and movements, sleep issues, anxiety, cravings, attention/memory issues, suicidal tendencies, withdrawing, depression
- Physical signs may be: Marks on veins from injecting, dry mouth/nose, impaired vision, constricted pupils
- Abusing opioids can lead to legal issues or homelessness
- The more someone uses, the more

dependent they become on the drug. They may develop tolerance so that they have to take more over time in order to get the same effects.

- A person may overdose, which occurs when they take high doses of a drug, which can slow or stop breathing. This can happen with opioids or when opioids are combined with other drugs.

TOP TREATMENT METHODS

- It's important to receive treatment for addiction and any present mental health disorders at the same time (dual diagnosis). This is necessary in order to decrease the chance of relapse.
- The longer one stays in treatment, the more likely they are to stay clean afterwards.
- Outpatient treatment allows a person to maintain their daily life while working regularly with a therapist.
- Residential treatment includes temporary housing along with medical and mental health care.
- Inpatient involves around the clock intensive care.
- Sober living homes allow people to maintain their daily life while also receiving varying levels of treatment. They require that a person stays clean to live there.
- 12 Step groups give a framework for someone to work toward recovery. The fellowship can act as support.
- Medical management for withdrawal symptoms may be necessary. This can last anywhere from hours to weeks, and there is medication that can ease some symptoms.
- Treatment may include medication (to decrease drug cravings; to address mental health issues).