

PREVENTION TEEN TALKS: OPIOID CRISIS

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What are Opioids?

Opioids are a class of drugs that can be used medically to reduce pain as prescribed by a doctor. There are multiple illegal 'street' drugs also in this class, such as heroin and illegally dispersed prescription medication such as oxycodone and the synthetic opioid fentanyl. Only when prescribed by a doctor and medically needed their benefits outweigh the risks.



There is a misconception that all opioids are safe because they are prescribed by doctors. However, they require a prescription for use because doctors must ensure the benefits outweigh the possible risks. There are many factors such as age, weight, health, addiction risk, etc. that doctors must assess before prescribing them.

Why They're Dangerous & Form Addictions

As briefly discussed, Opioids have risks attached to their use. A single dose can cause your heartbeat and breathing to slow. Taking opioids with alcohol or other sedatives can increase these risks and gradually will need a higher dose to have the same effects. It is important to note, increasing the dosage increases the risks/side effects. Opioid addiction is serious and can be very difficult to discontinue use due to withdraw symptoms which occur. If prescribed any type of opioid, you should follow all specific instructions provided by your doctor.

Opioid misuse can lead to overdose. Overdose is when a person has taken too much of a substance, leading the body to shut down, potentially leading to death. This can be prevented by following the prescribing doctor's instructions.



Tolerance & Withdrawal

Tolerance is a reduced response to an opioid and usually leads to a feeling of a 'need' to use increasing doses to achieve the desired effect. Your body essentially gets used to the usual amount you use which causes a need to use more in order to get the same effect.

Withdrawals are physical and psychological symptoms you experience when attempting to quit use of substances such as opioids, alcohol, tobacco and nicotine and more. These symptoms can be life-threatening.



Fentanyl Danger

This synthetic opioid is incredibly strong and can be 50-100 times more potent than heroin or prescription opioids. Fentanyl is used medically sparingly but is being used by illegal distributors of street drugs. It can be incorporated in other substances such as heroin or cocaine without the user's knowledge. Since it is so much stronger and the user is unaware, there is an extremely high risk of overdose. This is a serious threat in the U.S. and is another reason to avoid illegal substances.

MYTH CHECK!

Myth: "Opioids are safe because my doctor prescribed them to me"

- **MYTH:** Prescription opioids—when used long term or incorrectly—can cause the brain to become reliant on the drug and are addictive.



Taking Precautions

Some teens may be offered opioids by individuals who are being prescribed the medication. Even if an opioid is being prescribed, it does not mean it is safe to take. Opioid prescriptions require strict supervision a doctor and are prescribed specifically to individuals who need to take the medication to address specific symptoms. It can be difficult to refuse peer pressure. It is always good to have a future plan on what to do if you were to be offered a substance. Think of methods to refuse and remove yourself from the unsafe situation.



Horseshoe Drive Location | Prevention Services
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Parenting Classes: To register contact 239-263-4013
Prevention Talks: DLCPrevention.org
Mind Your Mind: DLCMindYourMind.org

