

# TIPS *for* TEENS

## Opioids



peerhealth

**SLANG:** O.C. • OXY • PERCS •  
VIKE • M • MONKEY • WHITE  
STUFF • LEAN • SCHOOLBOY  
• SIZZURP • PURPLE DRANK •  
LOADS

## Get The Facts

### OPIOIDS AFFECT YOUR BRAIN.

Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, as well as synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, morphine, and many others. They 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 misuse prescription opioids before starting to use heroin.

### OPIOIDS CAN KILL YOU.

Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the United States and among youth, with 68,690 drug overdose deaths between March 2017 and March 2018. More than 46,000 of those deaths involved opioids.

### OPIOID ADDICTION IS TREATABLE.

Methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone are medications that are FDA-approved to treat opioid use disorder. For more information, visit <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/medications-to-treat-opioid-addiction/efficacy-medications-opioid-use-disorder>.

## Learn More:

Get the latest information on how drugs affect the brain and body at [teens.drugabuse.gov](https://teens.drugabuse.gov).

### TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OPIOIDS, CONTACT:

SAMHSA  
1-877-SAMHSA-7  
(1-877-726-4727)  
(English and Español)

TTY 1-800-487-4889  
[www.samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)

## Q&A

### MY DOCTOR PRESCRIBED ME OPIOIDS. DOESN'T THAT MEAN THEY'RE SAFE?

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

### IF I USE OPIOIDS, WILL I BECOME ADDICTED?

Prescription opioids can cause physical dependence when used as directed or addiction if misused; illegal opioids such as heroin are also highly addictive. People who regularly use prescription opioids or heroin often develop tolerance, which means that they need higher and/or more frequent doses of the drug to get the desired effects.

## The Bottom Line:

Many people are prescribed opioids out of medical necessity, but opioids can still be dangerous and addictive. Even if someone is prescribed one of these medications—such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, and morphine—misuse of these substances is rampant. Talk to your parents, a doctor, a counselor, a teacher, or another adult you trust if you have questions.



## A note on harm reduction:

Harm reduction can help manage the risks and benefits of using substances (alcohol, drugs) for personal health.

Harm reduction does not encourage drinking or substance use, especially if you are underage. Harm reduction acknowledges that there are ways young people can and might reduce harm if using substances

Harm reduction helps us understand how to best take care of our personal and community health while still acknowledging that not everyone will refrain from using substances altogether. For more resources on harm reduction, please visit, <https://www.release.org.uk/drugs-health-advice>