

Opiates

Imagine a life free of opiate obsession and all the losses incurred feeding the habit.

Opiates are
**POWERFULLY
ADDICTIVE**

and can result in intense addiction after only a few days of use.

Opiates are extremely potent drugs that depress the central nervous system, relieve pain, and cause drowsiness. Hundreds of millions of opiate prescriptions are written every year. Millions of Americans admit to abusing them, and over ten thousand die yearly because of this abuse.

HOW OPIATES WORK

People are most often prescribed opiates for severe pain. Special receptors in the brain and body are interrupted when opiates are used, blocking the pain messages being sent to the brain. This creates a feeling of euphoria, drowsiness, and warmth. Your heart rate is reduced and blood vessels widen.

TYPES OF OPIATES

There are three kinds of opiates- natural, semi-synthetic, and fully synthetic.

- **Natural opiates** - Derived from plants, such as the opium poppy. Morphine, codeine, and thebaine are common natural opiates.
- **Semi-synthetic opiates** - These are created in laboratories from natural opiates, including hydromorphone, hydrocodone, and oxycodone (or OxyContin). Heroin, the most abused opiate, is also made from morphine. These drugs are typically ingested, injected, snorted, or smoked.
- **Fully synthetic opiates** - Completely manmade, fentanyl, methadone, tramadol, and pethidine are examples of fully synthetic opiates.

OPIATE RISKS

Addiction is a very real threat when using opiates. The first sign is tolerance, where your body requires more opiates to achieve the same effects. Using can cause delayed reaction times and sedation. Long-term use causes immune system damage, gastrointestinal and respiratory problems, and blood disorders. If you feel withdrawal symptoms when you stop using opiates, or if you have an obsession with obtaining more (i.e. shopping around for more prescriptions), you are likely already addicted. Signs of opiate abuse are physical, emotional, and behavioral.

TREATMENT

Opiate addiction is serious but treatable through detox, therapy, and recovery.

Other medications are often prescribed to help with withdrawal symptoms. Doctors often prescribe methadone or buprenorphine to make the transition more manageable.

ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Be honest** - Take a real assessment of your life. Lying or underestimating the problem won't benefit you. Tell your doctor or mental health professional what you're taking and for how long.
- ✓ **Seek support** - You likely have friends and family members who desire to help. There is also a network of community resources available. Talk to your doctor or counselor for more info.
- ✓ **Get help with withdrawal** - Seek professional treatment, as detoxing from opiate use can cause serious withdrawal symptoms. Don't ever try to go through withdrawal alone.

KEEP IN MIND

Though fighting through an opiate addiction is difficult, there are plenty of people ready to help you. Recovery groups like Narcotics Anonymous can be extremely valuable for those facing addiction. Relating to another's story is a powerful tool in the recovery process.

What positive choice will you make today to help yourself or others step out of an opiate addiction?