

# Opioids and the Opioid Epidemic

## About opioids:

Opioids are a type of pain drug. They can help people handle sickness, injury or surgery. Doctors give opioids to cut pain signals to the brain. All these are opioids:

- Codeine
- Fentanyl
- Hydrocodone
- Morphine
- Oxycodone
- Heroin—a kind of opioid that is not legal

## Opioids are highly addictive.

Taking opioids without a health reason or overusing them can cause habit--problems. In fact, opioid addiction is a wide spread problem in the U.S. Each day, about 91 Americans die from opioid overdose, according the CDC (Centers for Disease Control).

## Taking too many doses of opioids can have dangerous results.

If your doctor gives an opioid drug, take it only as prescribed. Taking more than your doctor has prescribed can result in:

- Weak breathing
- Constipation
- Blocked pain signals
- Mental fog
- Nausea
- Organ damage
- Death— opioids are so strong, even one large dose can kill you.

## How do know if you're relying too much on opioids?

Watch for these signs:

- You keep raising the dose to control pain
- When you use less of the drug or quit, you get symptoms of withdrawals like stomach cramps, muscle aches or cold sweats

## What are the signs of abuse?

- Using your drug with other drugs your doctor did not order
- Too many refills
- Injecting the drug or snorting it

Talk to your doctor about how (opioid) drugs can affect you.

**Do you have health questions?**

Call our 24-hour Nurse Advice Line. We are here to help you.

English: **(888) 275-8750**

Español: **(866) 648-3537**

TTY/TDD:

711

**Member Information: Pain Self-Management** (\*contact Case Management for additional resources)

- Opioid Safety – [\(Opioid\) Factsheet from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- Naloxone - [Naloxone Fact Sheet](#) from the CA State board of Pharmacy and San Francisco Department of Public Health