

Access

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Are you concerned about the opioid crisis?

Prescription and illicit opioids have dominated the news in recent years. Opioid overdoses have claimed the lives of beloved celebrities and entertainers, while heroin has become increasingly commonplace in high schools throughout the country. The opioid epidemic has become so prevalent and widespread that the president has declared it a national emergency.

Are you personally affected by opioid use or are you worried about someone you love? Here is some information that may be helpful to you.



What you need to know

With approximately 115 Americans dying from opioid overdoses every day, the misuse of and addiction to opioids, which include prescription pain medications, heroin and other synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, has taken a serious social and economic toll on the US. Consider the following statistics:

- **Roughly 21 to 29 percent of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain misuse them.**
- **Between 8 and 12 percent develop an opioid use disorder.**
- **An estimated 4 to 6 percent who misuse prescription opioids transition to heroin.**
- **About 80 percent of people who use heroin, first misused prescription opioids.**

Opioids in the US: the New Drug Epidemic

Over the past 15 years, communities across our nation have been devastated by increasing prescription and illicit opioid abuse, addiction, and overdose.

In 2016 ...



More than 11 million Americans misused prescription opioids



Nearly 1 million used heroin



2.1 million had an opioid use disorder due to prescription opioids or heroin

Since 2013, the introduction of illegally produced fentanyl has made the problem worse.

Here are some of the physical and behavioral symptoms commonly associated with opioid use¹:

- Extra pill bottles turning up in the trash (or pills getting “lost” or “disappearing”)
- Noticeable elation/euphoria
- Marked sedation/drowsiness
- Confusion
- Constricted pupils
- Slowed breathing
- Intermittent nodding off, or loss of consciousness
- Shifting or dramatically changing moods
- Social withdrawal/isolation
- Sudden financial problems



The signs and symptoms of opioid dependence may include some or all of the following:

- Needing an increased amount of opioids to relieve pain or get high
- Feeling physical or mental withdrawal symptoms after stopping opioid use
- Being unsuccessful in repeated attempts to cut down or control opioid use

What you can do

If you face chronic pain, there are alternatives to opioids. Before you accept a prescription for any pain medication, ask your health care provider about what type of pain medication it is and what other options may be. Short-term use of opioids can be safe, but if you expect to take a pain medication for an extended period of time, it's worth asking about addiction risk and if alternative painkillers are available.

Your EAP can help

Help is available for you or a family member who is struggling with opioid dependence. Your EAP can be your go-to resource for addressing any opioid-related challenges that you are facing. Your own health care provider can help, too.



Remember, opioid addiction is a treatable disease.

Aurora's EAP has helped many employees put their problems with drug or alcohol abuse into perspective and get the help they need. Sometimes, your most important inner resource – your own health and emotional wellbeing – becomes neglected due to worry and concern about a family member who is struggling. Seeking outside help may improve the situation for all involved.

Opioid dependence is a chronic condition and remaining opioid-free can be a challenge. However, it can be done. Opioid dependence has become a serious societal problem. It's negatively affecting all of our communities, and so many families and children. Don't let yourself or a loved one become another sad statistic. Please seek help today.



Don't know where to turn?

- You can receive a **free and confidential consultation for drug and alcohol issues from Aurora EAP and get assistance with any related problems (behavioral health or financial issues) that you or your family are struggling with.**
- The EAP can provide access to **free national and community-based resources for drug addiction** such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) national hotline. This is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disordersⁱⁱⁱ.

For more information, please call Aurora EAP at 1-800-236-3231.

¹National Institute on Drug Abuse: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/opioid-overdose-crisis>

ⁱⁱ<https://drugabuse.com/library/opiate-abuse/#signs-and-symptoms>

ⁱⁱⁱ<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>