

Opioids



What are Opioids?

- Opioids are both prescription medications and illegal drugs. They are often prescribed for pain.
- Natural opioids are from the seed pods of the opium poppy plant (e.g., morphine, opium)
- Semi-Synthetic opioids are made by labs by processing natural opioids
 - Heroin and other pain relievers (e.g., oxycodone, hydrocodone)
- Synthetic opioids are completely manufactured in labs with higher potency
 - Fentanyl (often added to illicit drugs and pills)

How do Opioids Work?

- They enter the body and travel to the brain to attach to specific receptors that are important for bodily function.
- Opioids attaching to those receptors tells the body to stop making natural chemicals (e.g., dopamine) important for the reward center.
- They build a tolerance and need more to get the same feeling in their reward center.
- This leads to more risky drug use (e.g., injection, using heroin instead)
- Opioid overdoses are common due to the overprescribing and mislabeling of opioids by the pharmaceutical companies.



What are the health risks with Opioids?

- People are at risk for HIV, Hepatitis.
- Taking opioids with other drugs increases the likelihood of harm and overdose.
- Opioids can make someone more sensitive to pain.
- Opioids, like other substance use, can affect your immune system.
- Constipation, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, cardiovascular issues (e.g., slower heart rate).
- Depression and intimacy issues.
- Opioid Use Disorder (e.g., Type of Substance Use Disorder)

For more information regarding Opioids, please visit:



Source:

NIDA. 2024, November 22. Opioids.

Retrieved from

<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/opioids> on 2025, June 12