

What Are Opioids?

- Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, morphine, and many others.
- When used correctly under a health care provider's direction, prescription pain medicines are helpful. However, misusing prescription opioids risks dependence and addiction.

[Understanding Drug Use and Addiction](#)

The initial decision to take drugs is voluntary for most people, but can lead to brain changes that challenge an addicted person's self-control and interfere with their ability to resist intense urges to take drugs.

[Prescription Opioids](#)

In addition to the serious risks of addiction, abuse, and overdose, the use of prescription opioids can have many side effects, even when taken as directed.

- [Opioids: Basic Overview](#)
- [Prescription Pain Medications: Opioids Guide for Teens](#)
- [Opioid Abuse and Addiction](#)
- [Prescription Drug Abuse](#)
- [Research Report: Prescription Drug Abuse](#)

[Fentanyl and Other Synthetic Opioids](#)

Fentanyl and similar compounds like carfentanil are powerful synthetic opioids -- 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. High doses of opioids, especially potent opioids such as fentanyl, can cause breathing to stop completely, which can lead to death.

- [A Patient's Guide to Fentanyl](#)

[Heroin](#)

Heroin is a highly addictive drug made from morphine, which comes from opium poppy plants. Some prescription opioid pain medicines have effects similar to heroin. Research suggests that misuse of these drugs may open the door to heroin use.

- [Medical Facts About Heroin](#)
- [Easy-to-Read Heroin Drug Facts](#)
- [Research Report: Prescription Opioid Use is a Risk Factor for Heroin Use](#)
- [Today's Heroin Epidemic](#)

[Drugs of Abuse, A DEA Resource Guide: 2017 Edition](#)

The Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA's) resource guide is designed to be a reliable resource on the most commonly abused and misused drugs in the United States. This comprehensive guide provides important information about the harms and consequences of drug use.