

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

What Every American Should Know About The Opioid Crisis

Our Friends · Tuesday, March 10th, 2020

In the year 2018, 10.3 million Americans abused prescription opioids, according to [The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#). Fatal overdoses are on the rise for people of all races, genders, and age groups. It has become increasingly likely that someone you know will be affected by opioid addiction.

Here's what you should know about this epidemic.

What Are Opioids?

The term opioid refers to a drug class of pain-relievers derived from the opium poppy plant. Both prescription painkillers such as OxyContin and street drugs like Heroin fall under this umbrella term. Opioids block pain signals between the brain and the body.

In addition to curbing pain, opioids can produce the effect of feeling happy, relaxed, and high. They are also highly addictive.

How Did Opioid Addiction Become So Widespread?

In the early 1990s, the number of prescriptions for opioid painkillers spiked. Pharmaceutical companies insisted that the risk of addiction with these drugs was low, and reassured doctors that writing prescriptions for patients after accidents and surgeries was just fine.

Many people started using opioids that were prescribed to them, completely trusting it was part of their recovery process. They then found themselves continuing to use after their prescription had expired, hooked on an addictive drug.

Can Anyone Become Addicted To Opioids?

While many of us can't imagine using heroin, we probably know what's like to blindly trust the advice of a medical professional. There are countless stories of people who became hooked on opioids, although they had never used any other drug in their life.

If you are ever prescribed an opioid, be certain to take it exactly as instructed. Do not increase your dose or change the method in which you ingest the pills, such as crushing them into a powder to snort.

What Are The Signs Of Opioid Abuse?

If someone uses opioids in a method not prescribed by a doctor, such as more frequently or longer than instructed, they are abusing opioids. Here are some tell-tale signs of opioid abuse and addiction:

- Mood swings that seem out of character
- Withdrawal from social activities
- Frequent visits to multiple doctors to get additional prescriptions
- Constricted pupils
- Disrupted sleeping patterns
- Impulsive or erratic behavior

What Does Opioid Withdrawal Feel Like?

Opioids are addictive because of their initial positive response in the body. They relieve pain and produce a feeling of calm or even euphoria. Over time however, a user will begin to crave ever larger doses.

When an addicted individual tries to cut back on opioid use or stop altogether, uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms occur:

- Anxiety and restlessness
- Trouble sleeping
- Muscle aches
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea

It's important to realize that the withdrawal process is incredibly difficult. If someone you know is trying to stop using opioids, they are going to need help and support.

What Is The Treatment And Recovery Process Like?

Treatment and recovery are absolutely possible with support. [Drug and alcohol detox](#) facilities are staffed by medical professionals with expertise in psychiatry and the detox process. These facilities provide a safe place for addicts to stop using.

Those who seek professional treatment are less likely to relapse than individuals who try to quit on their own.

How Can I Help End The Opioid Crisis?

The key to fighting an epidemic like this one is knowledge and compassion. Discuss the dangers of opioids with your friends and family members. Acknowledge that addiction is a disease that can affect anyone regardless of their background.

If you are prescribed opioids for any reason, take them exactly as prescribed and store them securely. Should you have a supply left over, dispose of it properly. Most communities have DEA-authorized collection boxes for unused prescription opioids.

Learn the signs of an opioid overdose so you can take proper action if the situation arises.

Conclusion

The opioid crisis has claimed too many lives already and continues to plague the nation. The more educated we become on this tragic epidemic, the better equipped we will be to fight it.

This entry was posted on Tuesday, March 10th, 2020 at 10:32 am and is filed under [Lifestyle](#), [Sponsored](#)

You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. Both comments and pings are currently closed.