
THE TRUTH ABOUT
PAINKILLERS
Dillies
Percs
Juice
Hillbilly Heroin
drugfreeworld.org

WHY THIS BOOKLET WAS PRODUCED

You hear a lot of talk about drugs these days—at school, in the streets, on the internet and TV. Some of it is true, some not.

What you may not know is that much of what you hear about drugs actually comes from those selling them. Former dealers have said they would tell people anything to get them to buy drugs.

You need the real facts and the truth about drugs so you can make an informed decision about them. That is why we have prepared this booklet—for you.

Your feedback is important to us, so let us know what you think about this booklet. Visit us at **DrugFreeWorld.org** and email us at **info@drugfreeworld.org**.

Prescription PAINKILLER Abuse



About 10 million Americans misuse prescription painkillers for nonmedical purposes.

Many young people turn to prescription drugs to get high because they believe these drugs are safer than illegal street drugs. However, they often do not realize the risks of using these powerful drugs.

Long-term use of painkillers can lead to dependence, even for people who are prescribed them for medical reasons.

A surge in prescription painkiller use in the United States began in the mid-1990s with the introduction of new opioid-based medications such as OxyContin.

These were widely marketed as having low potential for addiction, but that claim proved to be false.

What are PAINKILLERS?



Painkillers are a large class of drugs that relieve pain. Some are made from the opium poppy plant,* while others are synthetic opioids created in labs. Both types act on the body and brain in the same way as drugs like morphine and heroin do.

Whether prescribed legally through a medical doctor or obtained illegally, opioids are powerful drugs that block the nervous system's transmission of pain signals. Opioids also stimulate portions of the brain associated with pleasure. Thus, in addition to masking pain, they produce a false sense of euphoria or a high.

Most painkillers are highly addictive and extremely difficult to quit once dependency develops.

* opium poppy plant: a flowering plant that produces seed pods containing a brownish, sticky extract (called *opium*) with strong pain-relieving and intoxicating effects

The most commonly prescribed prescription opioids are:

Hydrocodone: a prescription opioid sold under many trade names including Vicodin and Lortab. It is similar in strength to morphine and highly addictive.

Oxycodone: a prescription opioid commonly sold under the trade names OxyContin and Percocet. Abused, it produces similar effects to heroin, affects the nervous system the same way and is addictive.

Morphine: a prescription opioid derived from opium and used for treatment of pain. It is addictive and has a high potential for abuse.

Codeine: a prescription opioid pain reliever used for mild to moderate pain or used in cough medications. Like other opioids, it is addictive.

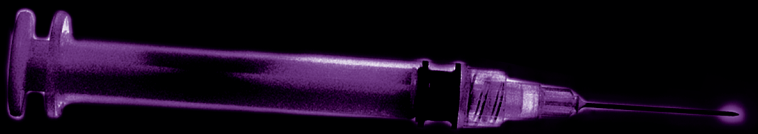
Methadone: a prescription opioid that is used as a maintenance drug for opioid addiction and as a painkiller. It does not produce a high as other opioids do, but if taken in large quantities it can produce a sort of euphoria. It is highly addictive.

Oxymorphone: a prescription opioid commonly sold under the trade name Opana that has a similar abuse potential to morphine.

Fentanyl: a very powerful opioid that is 50 times more potent than heroin. As a prescription drug, it is used for severe pain. Illegally produced fentanyl is often mixed with other drugs and has caused a dramatic increase in drug overdose deaths since 2011.

Hydromorphone: a prescription opioid sold under the trade name Dilaudid that is four to eight times stronger than morphine and is highly addictive.

"At the age of 20, I became an addict to a narcotic,* which began with a prescription following a surgery. In the weeks that followed [the operation], in addition to orally abusing the tablet, crushing it up enabled me to destroy the controlled release mechanism and to swallow or snort the drug. It can also be injected to produce a feeling identical to shooting heroin. The physical withdrawal from the drug is nothing short of agonizing pain."
—James



* narcotic: a drug affecting the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord), which can cause dizziness, lack of coordination and unconsciousness

Street Names for Painkillers

Generic Name	Brand Name	Street Name
Oxycodone	OxyContin, Percocet	Ms. O.C., Oxy, Oxycet, Ozone, Roxy, Ercs, Kickers, Percs, Rims, Tires
Hydrocodone	Lortab, Norco, Vicodin	Bananas, Dro, Fluff, Hydros, Tabs, Vikes, V-itamin, Watsons, 357s
Propoxyphene	Darvocet, Darvon	Footballs, N's, Pink Footballs, Pinks, Yellow Footballs, 65s
Hydromorphone	Dilaudid, Exalgo	D, Dillies, Footballs, Juice, Smack
Meperidine	Demerol	Demmies, Pain Killer
Fentanyl	Actiq, Sublimaze	Apache, China Girl, China White, Dance Fever, Friend, Goodfella, Jackpot, Murder 8, Tango & Cash, TNT

Understanding Why Painkillers Become So ADDICTIVE

Opioid painkillers produce a short-lived euphoria, and they are also highly addictive.

Long-term use of painkillers can lead to physical dependence, where the body adapts to the drug and withdrawal symptoms occur if usage stops. Tolerance can develop, requiring higher doses for the same effect.

Like all drugs, painkillers simply mask the pain for which they are taken. They don't cure anything. Someone continuously trying to dull the pain may find himself taking higher and higher doses—only to

"I am **addicted to prescription pain medication.** I first started taking prescription painkillers [some] years ago when my doctor prescribed them to treat post-surgical pain following spinal surgery. Over the past several years, **I have tried to break my dependence on pain pills** and, in fact, twice checked myself into medical facilities in an attempt to do so. [I have] recently agreed with my physician about the next steps."

—Rush



Family members protest deadly painkillers. Rehab experts say addiction to powerful painkillers such as OxyContin is among the hardest of all to quit.

discover that he cannot make it through the day without the drug.

Symptoms of withdrawal can include intense nausea, elevated heart rate, high blood pressure, restlessness, irritability, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, cold flashes with goose bumps and involuntary leg movements.

One of the serious risks of opioids is respiratory depression—high doses can cause breathing to slow down and possibly stop, leading to death.

The Opioid Epidemic

After years of increasing abuse, addiction and overdose deaths, the US declared the opioid epidemic a public health emergency.

Despite efforts to address it, around 200 opioid-related overdose deaths occur daily. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, up to 29 percent of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain abuse them, and about 10 percent develop an opioid addiction.

The opioid overdose crisis is currently being driven by fentanyl. Dealers often add fentanyl to illicit drugs to increase their potency, unbeknownst to the buyer. In a year, nearly 70 percent of all opioid overdose deaths involved fentanyl and other synthetic opioids.

Drug overdose deaths in the US surpassed 100,000 annually by the early 2020s, mainly due to painkiller abuse.





"I didn't think I had a 'drug problem'—I was buying the tablets at the chemist [drugstore]. It didn't affect my work. I would feel a bit tired in the mornings, but nothing more. The fact that I had a problem came to a head when I took an overdose of about 40 tablets and found myself in the hospital. I spent 12 weeks in the clinic conquering my addiction." —Alex

"Pretty much as long as I can remember, I've had highs and lows. I would get easily upset by the littlest things. I would have anger outbursts or hate someone for no reason at all. For a long while, I thought I was bipolar. I started using drugs last October to help me with my unwanted feelings. But, believe it or not, it just made stuff worse. I now have to deal with my addiction and my emotional problems."
—Thomas

Mental & Physiological

Effects of Painkillers

- Constipation
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Addiction
- Unconsciousness
- Respiratory depression
- Increased risk of heart attack
- Coma
- Death



Painkillers: A SHORT HISTORY

Painkillers, originally derived from the opium poppy, have been used for thousands of years for both recreational and medicinal purposes. The most active substance in opium is morphine—named after Morpheus, the Greek god of dreams. Morphine is a very powerful painkiller, but it is also very addictive.

In the 16th century, laudanum, opium prepared in an alcoholic solution, was used as a painkiller.

Morphine was first extracted from opium in a pure form in the early 19th century. It was used widely as a painkiller during the American Civil War, and many soldiers became addicted.



Highly addictive opiates have been used for thousands of years for both recreational and medicinal purposes.



Morphine, the most active substance in opium, is a very powerful painkiller that hooked many US Civil War soldiers.



A bottle of codeine tablets—all opiates temporarily relieve pain, but are highly addictive.

Codeine is a less powerful drug than morphine that can be extracted from opium or synthesized. It was first isolated in 1832 in France by Pierre-Jean Robiquet as an alternative to raw opium for medical purposes, with fewer side effects. It is used mainly as a cough remedy.

Throughout the early 19th century, the recreational use of opium grew and, in the 1830s, the British dependence on the drug reached an all-time high. The British sent warships to the coast of China in 1839 in response to China's attempt to suppress the opium traffic, beginning the First Opium War.

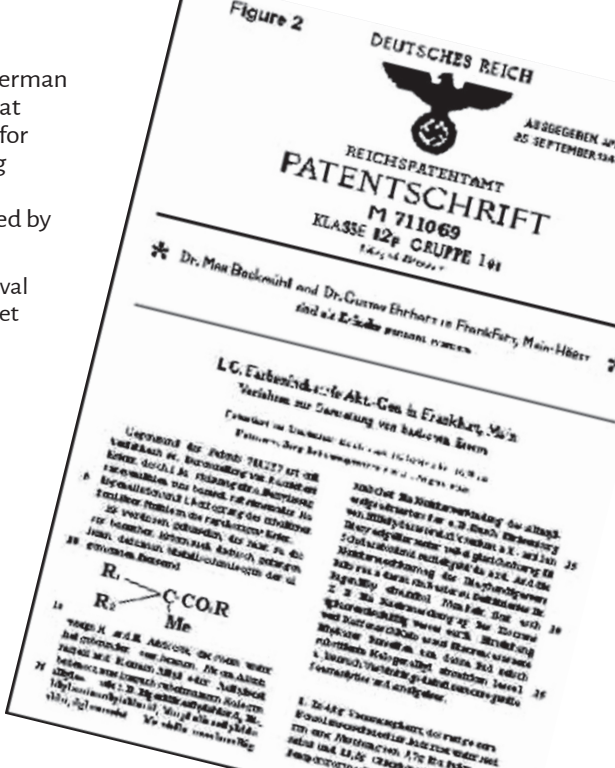
In 1874, chemists trying to find a less addictive form of morphine made heroin, which was first promoted as a cure for morphine addiction. But heroin was found to have twice the potency of morphine, and heroin addiction soon became a serious problem.

In 1909, the US Congress banned the importation and use of opium for any purpose other than medicinal.

Methadone was first synthesized in 1937 by German scientists Max Bockmühl and Gustav Ehrhart at the IG Farben company. They were searching for a painkiller that would be easier to use during surgery with less addiction potential than morphine or heroin, yet methadone is believed by many to be even more addictive than heroin.

New painkillers came on the market with approval from the Food and Drug Administration: Percocet in 1976, Vicodin in 1978 and OxyContin in 1995.

Fentanyl was first introduced in the 1960s as an intravenous anesthetic to treat severe pain. Starting in around 2013, dealers began adding fentanyl to other illicit drugs, resulting in epidemic overdoses and deaths.


Figure 2

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REICHSPATENTAMT

PATENTSCHRIFT

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* Dr. Max Bockmühl and Dr. Gustav Ehrhart in Frankfurt, Main-Höchst

I.G. Farbenindustrie Akt.-Ges. in Frankfurt, Main

Verfahren zur Darstellung von basischen Estern

$$R_1 \diagdown C \cdot CO_2R \quad (R_2 = Me)$$

The stamp of IG Farben, the German company whose chemists Bockmühl and Ehrhart developed the formula for methadone (right)—a synthetic form of heroin.

An International Crisis

Among Americans aged 12 and older who used illicit drugs for the first time, prescription painkillers are the second most commonly abused substance after marijuana.

In one year, about 10 million people in the US reported the nonmedical use of painkillers.

The number of opioid users nearly doubled over a decade to 62 million people worldwide.

In 2019, Europeans aged 15–64 who used opioids in the last year stood at 3.6 million.

Over the past five years, there has also been an increase in the number of drug overdose deaths in the European Union.

Opioid painkiller prescriptions increased by 34 percent in England, and a UK study found that more than 1 in 10 people given opioids for the first time became long-term opioid users within a year.

Doctors and rehabilitation specialists report that prescription painkiller addiction is one of the most difficult to overcome.

Warning Signs of Prescription Painkiller Dependency

Most commonly prescribed opioid painkillers (OxyContin, Vicodin, methadone, Darvocet, Lortab, Lorcet and Percocet), while offering relief from pain, can also cause individuals' bodies to start needing the drugs in order to feel normal.

Here are 10 warning signs to watch for if you think someone you know may be developing a painkiller addiction:

1. Increase of one's dose over time as a result of growing tolerant to the drug and needing more to get the same effect.
2. Change in personality and shifts in energy, mood and concentration as a result of everyday responsibilities becoming secondary to the need for the drug.
3. Social withdrawal from family and friends.
4. Ongoing use of painkillers after the medical condition they were meant to relieve has improved.
5. Spending large amounts of time obtaining prescriptions: driving great distances and visiting multiple doctors to obtain the drugs.
6. Change in daily habits and appearance: decline in personal hygiene, change in sleeping and eating habits, constant cough, running nose and red, glazed eyes.
7. Neglect of household chores and bills; calling in sick to school or work more often.
8. Increased sensitivity to normal sights, sounds and emotions; hallucinations.
9. Forgetting events that have taken place and experiencing blackouts.
10. Becoming defensive and lashing out in response to simple questions in an attempt to hide a drug dependency.

The Truth About Drugs

Drugs are essentially poisons. The amount taken determines the effect.

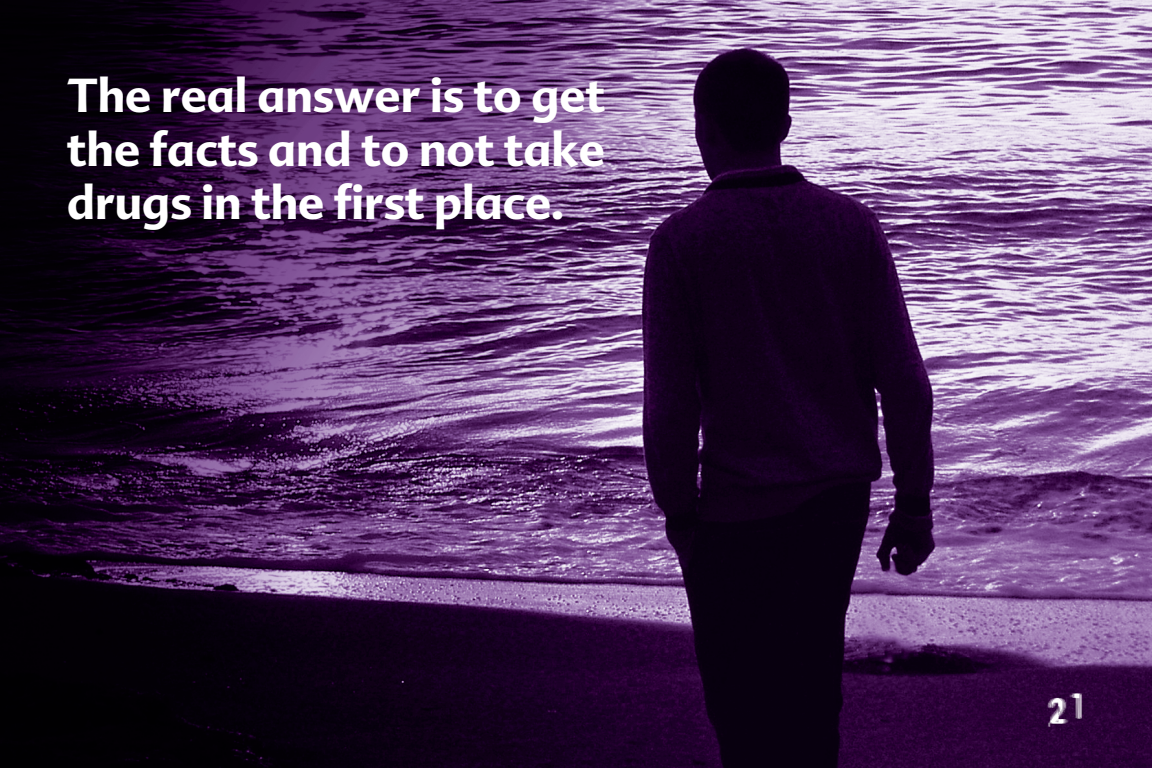
A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds you up). A greater amount acts as a sedative (slows you down). An even larger amount poisons and can kill.

This is true of any drug. Only the amount needed to achieve the effect differs.

But many drugs have another liability: they directly affect the mind. They can distort the user's perception of what is happening around him or her. As a result, the person's actions may be odd, irrational, inappropriate and even destructive.

Drugs block off all sensations, the desirable ones along with the undesirable. So, while providing short-term help in the relief of pain, they also wipe out ability and alertness and muddy one's thinking.

Medicines are drugs that are intended to speed up, slow down or change something about the way your body is working to try to make it work better. Sometimes they are necessary. But they are still drugs: they act as stimulants or sedatives, and too much can kill you. So if you do not use medicines as they are supposed to be used, they can be as dangerous as illegal drugs.


The real answer is to get the facts and to not take drugs in the first place.

WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS?

People take drugs because they want to change something in their lives.

Here are some of the reasons young people have given for taking drugs:

- To fit in
- To escape or relax
- To relieve boredom
- To seem grown-up
- To rebel
- To experiment

They think drugs are a solution. But eventually, drugs become the problem.

Difficult as it may be to face one's problems, the consequences of drug use are always worse than the problem one is trying to solve with them. The real answer is to get the facts and to not take drugs in the first place.



Millions of copies of booklets such as this have been distributed to people around the world in over 20 languages.



As new drugs appear on the streets and more information about their effects becomes known, existing booklets are updated and new ones created.

The booklets are published by the Foundation for a Drug-Free World, a nonprofit public benefit organization headquartered in Los Angeles, California.

The foundation provides educational materials, advice and coordination for its international drug prevention network. It works with youth, parents, educators, volunteer organizations and government agencies—anyone with an interest in helping people lead lives free from drug abuse.

REFERENCES:

For the references used to compile this booklet, go to DrugFreeWorld.org/refs.

PHOTO CREDITS: page 9: OxyABUSEkills.com (protest)

FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

This booklet is one in a series of publications that covers the facts about marijuana, alcohol, fentanyl, synthetic drugs, Ecstasy, cocaine, crack cocaine, crystal meth and methamphetamine, inhalants, heroin, LSD and prescription drug abuse. Armed with this information, the reader can make the decision to live a drug-free life.

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Foundation for a Drug-Free World
DrugFreeWorld.org • info@drugfreeworld.org
1 (888) 668-6378 • 1 (818) 952-5260

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