

WHAT IS AN OPIOID?

Opioids are a family of drugs that have morphine like effects. Their primary use is to relieve pain. Prescription opioids can be used to help relieve moderate to severe pain and are often prescribed following a surgery or injury, or for certain health conditions. These medications can be an important part of treatment but also come with serious health risk.

“In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of prescription opioids for the treatment of chronic pain unrelated to cancer”.

HOW ARE OPIOIDS HARMFUL?

Overdoses from opioids are on the rise and killing Americans of all races and ages. Families and communities across the country are coping with the health, emotional, and economic effects of this epidemic.

From 1999 to 2015, more than 183,000 people died in the United States from overdoses related to prescription opioids.

In Wallingford, we have lost over 120 people to overdose deaths since 2001 when the crisis began.

THE LATEST RESEARCH

In a recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, scientists discovered that Opioids are overprescribed and that for some types of pain, simple non-Opioid alternatives work just as well.

Scientists investigated whether alternative pain killers could be effective in treating pain in the emergency departments. The group studied more than 400 people who came to two emergency rooms in Bronx, New York, for arm or leg strains, sprains or fractures. They were randomly assigned to receive either non Opioid pain killers— a combination of ibuprofen and acetaminophen (Tylenol). After two hours, the doctors asked the people to rate their pain on an 11 point scale.

Scientists did not find much difference between the pain ratings among those who were given the non-Opioid pain relievers and the Opioid based ones. That’s a revelation, especially given that other studies have shown that even short term use of Opioids can lead to long term addiction, and nearly 19% of people leave emergency rooms with an Opioid prescription.

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OPIOID PRESCRIPTIONS HOLD A HIDDEN THREAT!

**YOU HAVE A CHOICE.
USE YOUR VOICE.**



91
AMERICANS

die every day from an **opioid overdose** (that includes prescription opioids and heroin).

Participate with your medical provider in developing the best treatment plan for you and your loved ones.

OPIOID PAIN MEDICATIONS, WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Opioid use disorders and overdose

After taking certain opioids, for just a short time, some individuals could become physically dependent and experience uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms. Misusing these medications increases the risk of:

- Drug dependency
 - Addiction
 - Overdose and
 - Death

COMMON OPIOID TREATMENTS AND PRESCRIPTIONS INCLUDE:

OXYCODONE

HYDROCODONE

OXYCONTIN

HYDROMORPHONE

MEPERIDINE

OXYMORPHONE

MORPHINE

PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES

As many as 25% of patients receiving opioid prescriptions in primary care settings struggle with opioid use disorder.

- Talk to your doctor about ways to manage your pain without taking opioids.
- Be involved in all aspects of your treatment plan
- Store all medications safely
- Safely dispose of unused medications.

MANAGING YOUR PAIN: WHICH APPROACH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

These options may actually work better and have fewer side effects. Options include:

- Pain relievers such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol), Ibuprofen and Naproxen
- Physical therapy and exercise
- Massage therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Acupuncture
- Yoga

A PHYSICIAN'S ADVICE



Of those Americans who begin using heroin, 80% of them first began taking legally prescribed Opioid medications, become addicted to them, and then turned to heroin. Prescription Opioid medicine have high risks and should be avoided as much as possible. Opioids are excellent for short term pain control, but people can become addicted to them within weeks. We should avoid Opioids for mild or moderate pain and use over the counter medication like Tylenol or Advil. Opioids should only be taken for server pain, and for as few days as possible. When we no longer are experiencing sever pain, we should stop all Opioids and use over the counter medicine if needed, and safely depose of any leftover Opioid pills. By minimizing our use of Opioid pills and discarding any leftovers, we decrease the odds of Opioid addiction and the risk of Opioid overdose for ourselves and our loved ones.

(Dr. Saxe's is the Chairman Emeritus of the Middlesex Hospital Emergency Department)