



Opioid Overdose

Overview

Millions of Americans suffer from pain and are often prescribed opioids to treat their conditions. However, the dangers of prescription misuse, opioid use disorder, and overdose have been a growing problem throughout the United States.

Since the 1990s, when the amount of opioids prescribed to patients began to grow, the number of overdoses and deaths from prescription opioids has also increased. Even as the amount of opioids prescribed and sold for pain has increased, the amount of pain that Americans report has not similarly changed.

From 1999 to 2017, almost 218,000 people died in the United States from overdoses related to prescription opioids. Overdose deaths involving prescription opioids were five times higher in 2017 than in 1999.¹

Prescription opioids

- Can be **prescribed** for **moderate-to-severe** pain, after **surgery** or **injury**, or pain from health conditions like **cancer**.
- Includes drugs like hydrocodone, oxycodone, codeine, and morphine.
- **Risks** include **misuse**, **addiction**, **overdose**, and **death**, especially with long term use.

References

1. Wide-ranging online data for epidemiologic research (WONDER). Atlanta, GA: CDC, National Center for Health Statistics; 2016. Available at <http://wonder.cdc.gov>.

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