



# Opioid Prescription Drug Fact Sheet



Learn about the growing problem of prescription drug misuse, abuse, and overdose in our community.

## What are opioids?

- Opioids are a family of prescription pain medication also called opiates, or narcotics.
- These potent drugs are known by their brand names or generic names, such as:
  - Codeine
  - Hydrocodone
  - Methadone
  - Norco
  - Fentanyl
  - Hydromorphone
  - Morphine
  - Oxycodone
  - Vicodin
- The street drug heroin is also an opioid.
- Opioids can be in pill, syringe, patch, and liquid form.
- When used safely, they are useful to control pain from surgery, injuries, cancer, and other major medical issues.



## What are the risks of opioid use?

- Patients trust opioid pain drugs because they are prescribed by a doctor or dentist. But these common drugs can cause side effects and even addiction and overdose.
- Taking more pain drugs than prescribed, or taking them with liquor or other drugs, can be deadly.
- Opioid misuse can lead to long-term health problems, unsafe driving, mental health problems, trouble breathing, addiction, overdose, and even death.
- 1 in 15 people who abuse prescription pain drugs will try heroin within 10 years.



## Who is at risk?

- People of all ages and even pets can be poisoned by prescription pain drugs.
- Almost 15% of 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders have misused a prescription drug in Alameda County.
- Students of every race and ethnic background misuse prescription drugs in every school district.
- Some people use prescription cough syrup to get high. Three rappers who made songs about it died after drinking the cough syrup. Tee shirts that promote the misuse of codeine are for sale in local sporting goods stores that target youth.

## What can I do about drug safety?

- ✓ **Talk to your doctor or pharmacist.** Ask your doctor about the risks of taking opioids. Request non-opioid options to manage pain.
- ✓ **Ask your pharmacist for your pills in “bubble packs.”** These help you keep track of your doses.
- ✓ **Lock up your meds.** Keep them out of reach of children, teens, and pets.
- ✓ **Never share meds.** It is against the law to give away or sell opioids prescribed for you. Most people who abused prescription drugs reported getting them from a family member or friend, not a doctor.
- ✓ **Know the signs of an OD.** Call 911 if you suspect overdose. By state law, you can buy naloxone—an antidote to opioid overdose—from a pharmacy without a prescription.
- ✓ **Dispose of meds safely.** Never put meds or needles in the garbage or flush them. Find safe drug take-back sites near you at <http://acgov.org/medscoalition/> under the “Drop-Off Sites” tab.
- ✓ **Get addiction treatment.** Anyone can find themselves dependent on pills. If you are concerned about a possible drug problem, call:
  - Alameda County’s ACCESS helpline at 1-800-491-9099
  - SAMHSA’s National helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357)