

HEROIN/OPIATE EPIDEMIC

What are opiates?

- Opiates are prescription (schedule 2) medications used to alleviate pain.
- Heroin is a more basic form and is derived directly from the poppy plant.
- Heroin and pain pills are chemically similar and are often substituted for each other by addicts.

Why Use Opiates?

- Doctors prescribe opiates to address pain. There are alternatives, but for significant pain issues (surgery, chronic pain, etc. nothing seems to work better).
- Users take opiates for the euphoric,, pleasant high.

Methods of Use

- Oral
- Nasal/inhalation
- Intravenous (needle use)
- Smoking or other methods (less common)

Are Opiates Addictive?

- 7-14 days for physical addiction in some cases.
- Aches and pains
- Nausea
- Diarrhea and cramping
- General flu-like symptoms
- All symptoms go away when the person used opiates again.

Users Become Addicts

- ① Casual use becomes addictive use.
- ① The need to avoid withdrawal drives the habit.
- ① Increase in tolerance over time leads to more frequent, more extreme use.
- ① Increase in tolerance also leads to more dangerous behavior (snorting, needle use).

Use Leads to Death

- ⦿ Difficult to predict the purity/effects of street drugs.
- ⦿ Periods of sobriety/incarceration reduce tolerance.
- ⦿ Addicts often know they are in danger of overdose but cannot stop themselves.
- ⦿ This loss of control is characteristic of addiction.

How to Protect Your Family

- ⦿ Get rid of expired opiates.
- ⦿ Lock up current medications. Seriously, in a lock box.
- ⦿ Talk to your loved ones.

Identifying an Addict

- “Nodding out”; too sleepy, nearly asleep, can’t stay awake.
- Slurred speech
- Pinpoint pupils
- Missing medications, doctor shopping.
- Theft, prostitution and crime.
- Don’t take their word for it.
- Get a urine test.

How to Help Someone with a Heroin/Opiate Addiction

- Do not enable (don't give money, make excuses for, bail out of jail).
- Write a letter to the judge/request treatment.
- Demand sobriety.
- Be firm but loving, this may be your only chance.

For Those Who Love an Addict

- Alanon
- Counseling
- Local Support Groups