

Opioids

Leader Talking Points

- Opiates/Opioids are natural or synthetic chemicals that reduce the “pain signals” in the brain and therefore the feelings of pain.
- Opioid analgesics or prescription opioids are medications used to treat pain.
 - Natural opioids (e.g., morphine, codeine)
 - Semi-synthetic opioids (e.g., oxycodone, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, oxymorphone)
 - Synthetic opioids (e.g., methadone, tramadol, fentanyl)
 - Illegal opioids (e.g., heroin)
- Prescription opioids are effective at treating moderate-to-severe pain, and in recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the acceptance and use of prescription opioids.
- As many as 35% of patients receiving long-term opioid therapy in a primary care setting struggle with opioid addiction.
- There are an estimated 15 million people who suffer from opioid dependence worldwide.
- Global estimates range from 69,000 to 190,000 deaths due to opioid overdose each year, 40% of which involve a prescription opioid.
- Risk factors for addiction and overdose include:
 - Recent surgeries, ER visits, procedures, or treatments in which opioids were prescribed
 - History of addictions, mental illness, or chronic pain
 - High doses and long-term or open-ended prescriptions
 - Multiple prescriptions from different doctors
 - Taking opioids with other medications, such as sleeping pills (e.g., Ambien) or sedatives
 - Rural and low-income populations
- How to help:
 - Self-check – Inventory your risks.
 - Talk with your doctor – Ask specifics about the medication, how to properly take it, and if there are any alternative therapies that could help.
 - Safe storage – Store medications so they can’t be accessed by others.
 - Proper disposal – Some pharmacies will accept unused medication, and many medications can be thrown away or flushed according to FDA guidelines. Also, be on the lookout for Prescription Drug Take Back Days (next U.S. event on April 28, 2018).
 - Identify problems use – Know the signs and symptoms of misuse, intoxication, and overdose.

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- Symptoms of intoxication and overdose:
 - Appearing sedated or drowsy, sleeping more
 - Dizzy or poor coordination
 - Slurred speech, “nodding” or intermittently dozing
 - Impaired memory or decision-making
 - Mood changes from normal to euphoric
 - Appearing depressed, jittery, or anxious
 - Constricted pupils
 - Lower motivation
- Ask R U OK?
 - Intervene at the earliest indication of a problem
 - Be prepared with information and ask, “Are you OK?”
 - Listen without judgment
 - Encourage action (e.g., contact EAP)
 - Follow up and check in
- Caterpillar’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a voluntary, confidential, FREE benefit that offers traditional counseling and work-life resources to help in many areas of our lives, including struggling with substance abuse/misuse.
 - Call 1-866-228-0567
 - Log onto benefits.cat.com>EAP