

# Opioids and the Opioid Crisis

For the past 20 years, millions have developed opioid use disorders after initial use. This has become a nationwide epidemic that continues to bring devastation to society.



Photo Credit: National Institutes of Health

## Opioids

- Powerful drugs prescribed for injuries, surgeries, or illnesses
  - Can be addictive and cause dependence
- Common opioids: prescription drugs (morphine, hydrocodone - Vicodin, oxycodone - Oxycontin), illegal drugs (heroin), fentanyl

## Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)

- Dangerous cycle where people need to constantly use opioids to relieve pain even if they have good intentions to stop

***Illness like any other medical disease that does NOT happen by choice and can be professionally treated***

## Fast Stats

Every day, around 130 lives are lost in the United States to opioid overdoses

23.5 million people in the US are currently in long term recovery from a substance use disorder

1 out of 3 people in the US knows someone with an opioid use disorder

Economy has taken a huge toll: opioid crisis cost \$631 billion from 2015-2018, and \$188 billion in 2019

# General Resources and Hotlines

Report to a trusted individual if a friend or family member is battling an opioid or other substance use disorder

Call a hotline - confidential, free, 24/7, 365 days a year

- provides treatment information service for individuals and families facing OUDs

National Hotline

**1-800-662-HELP (4357)**

Provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

**There is HOPE - people will get better when they receive the support they need**

The power lies in teenagers - you have the potential to help and save a loved one's life

For more information, visit [toolkitforteens.wixsite.com/opioidcrisis](https://toolkitforteens.wixsite.com/opioidcrisis)

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# How to Help a Loved One Struggling with an Opioid Use Disorder

## A TOOLKIT FOR TEENAGERS

Designed by a Teenager  
Designed for a Teenager

# Opioid Use Disorders

## Causes of Opioid Use Disorders

- 80% of individuals who use heroin first misused prescription opioids
- Family history of OUD and other substances
- Social and other medical factors
  - Psychiatric disorders like depression
  - Childhood abuse and neglect

1 out of 10 individuals prescribed pain medications for chronic pain develop an OUD

## How to Tell if One May Have an OUD

be alert if someone in the family has recently taken opioid medications

- Change in behavior
- Mood swings
- Social Isolation
- Loss of interest in activities
- Poor-decision making

- Withdrawal symptoms
  - Vomiting, hallucinations, anxiety, severe fatigue, sweating, muscle pain
- Taking opioids more often
- Receiving many prescriptions
- Abnormal sleep problems

Seek the attention of a medical expert if you suspect something does not seem right

## Signs and Responding to Opioid Overdose

- Unconscious
- Limp body
- Very pale skin
- Erratic heartbeat
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Choking, gurgling, snore-like sounds
- Administer *naloxone* if available
  - Medication to reverse an opioid overdose
  - Sprayed into nose or injected into muscle
- Lay person on side to prevent choking
- Stay with them until emergency workers arrive
- Perform CPR and rescue breaths if necessary

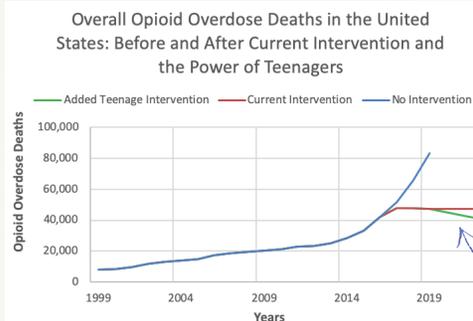
call 911 immediately if you think someone is experiencing an overdose

Be a Good Samaritan and act right away!  
Your prompt actions CAN save a life!

# The Power of Teenagers

## Why Should Teenagers Help?

- Opioid crisis has always been considered as an adult problem that only adults can solve
  - But teenagers HAVE a role to play
- Adult efforts have done enough to flatten the curve but more initiatives are needed to save more lives



If teenagers also assist in the opioid crisis, even more lives can be saved and the curve can be bent

\*data from the CDC; more information on the added teenage intervention calculations found in the website version of the guide

- This predictive graph shows that due to current intervention, many lives are saved and OUD cases have not exponentially increased

The younger population itself is a support group, so we need to support one another

## Erase the Stigma

- **Stigma:** regarding OUD as a moral issue instead of a treatable medical condition
  - evokes guilt and fear in those with OUD
- exists in older population

In 2017, only 36% of individuals with substance use disorders reported ever seeking treatment due to fear of societal judgment

- teenagers starting to learn about these issues without the stigmatizing perspectives
  - better positioned to help both **friends and family**

stigmatizing phrases	non-stigmatizing phrases (use instead)
addiction	opioid use disorder
addict or junkie	individual with opioid use disorder
clean or dirty	person in recovery

See the person not the illness, take action, take the pledge and be...

stigmafree

Photo Credit: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

# What Teenagers Can Do To Help

## Initiate the Conversation

can help both friends and family members (including adults) with OUD

- **Ask questions**
  - 'You don't seem like your usual self. Is everything alright?'
  - 'Is everything okay?'
  - 'How can I help? Don't worry, I'm here to support you.'
- Emphasize that you are there to listen and offer help as needed - **support exists**
- Chances exist that the individual will not open up immediately
  - **Be empathetic** - creates a more comfortable atmosphere for the individual
- Teenagers not always comfortable opening up to adults - rather talk to another teenager
- Can sometimes lead to an uncomfortable situation
  - Detach yourself and look at the story from an objective lens
  - *Find a coping mechanism* - best way is to not be the only individual listening to the story
  - **Remember, your initiative to help can have the end result of turning someone's life around**

Find a trusted individual that the individual with the OUD can turn to (e.g. parent, doctor, teacher, therapist, etc.)

## Mirror the Conversation

- Avoid providing instructions such as 'go get help'
- **Offer supportive statements** instead
  - 'based on what you said, what do you feel is best for you to receive help?'
- Center the conversation around health effects from the disease instead of making the individual feel at fault

people are willing to help: communicate your needs