

PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS & OPIOID DEPENDENCE

Opioid dependence and addiction can be tough. And anyone who uses any opioid can become dependent or addicted. Being dependent or addicted means that your body is used to having opioids in its system and needs them to work properly. Stopping or reducing the amount you use can be hard, leading to cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

But if you do want to stop or reduce the amount you use, there is help available.

SIGNS OF DEPENDENCE AND ADDICTION

Just using opioids doesn't mean that you're dependent or addicted. Plenty of people use opioids and don't develop a dependency or addiction to them. But it's easy to become dependent or addicted, and it can happen gradually without you even realising.

Here are some signs of opioid dependence or addiction to watch out for:

- Needing to take more to get the same effect
- Increasing the amount you use or using for longer than you planned to
- Spending increased time and effort getting opioids
- Experiencing withdrawal if you stop taking opioids or reduce your dose
- Reducing the amount of time you spend on other activities like work, sport or family
- Continuing to use even though it's causing you problems.

If you think you might be dependent on, or addicted to, opioids, ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I taking more than I used to?
- Does my mood get worse if I don't take opioids?
- Do I get anxious about the idea of not taking opioids?
- Do I need opioids to function in daily life?
- Am I using different methods to take opioids (i.e. snorting, injecting)?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you may want to speak to a drug worker, a social worker or your doctor. If you're not comfortable speaking to someone in person, you can use a telephone/online counselling service. Service providers should be able to recommend a doctor or health service you can speak to.

You may also want to talk to a close friend or loved one. You can even ask someone to go along with you to the doctor as a support person if you feel uncomfortable going by yourself.



International Overdose Awareness Day

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO OPIOID DEPENDENCE AND ADDICTION

Anyone can develop a dependency on, or addiction to, opioids but there are known factors that increase your risk. **These include:**

- History of dependence or misuse of opioids or other drugs
- History of mental illness
- Chronic pain
- Childhood trauma

There are lots of ways to reduce your chances of developing opioid dependence and addiction. Knowing and paying attention to the risks is a good start.

Drug use and dependence or addiction are highly stigmatised so people who are dependent or addicted may experience discrimination from other people, health services or police. This can make people feel ashamed and prevent them from asking for help.

Dependence or addiction is a medical condition that many people struggle with. You should not feel ashamed for experiencing dependence or seeking help.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about opioids, opioid dependence (which may be diagnosed as Opioid Use Disorder or OUD) and about different options for treatment, visit **lifesavers.global**
