



Opioids and Your Kids: What Parents Need to Know

A National Institute on Drug Abuse guide for parents



In Clovis Unified we are focusing on partnering with families to develop healthy young people.

The District's comprehensive wellness initiative is a joint effort of students, community health experts and educators focused on promoting wellness. Well people are less likely to fall into addiction, engage in self-harm, or pursue high risk behaviors because they have skills and tools to cope and rebound from life's challenges. With national attention focused on America's evolving opioid abuse epidemic, this Parent Bulletin shares information and tips from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Did You Know?

Opioid misuse can have lasting effects. When opioids are misused they can have harmful effects on your brain, like slowed breathing. Slowed breathing can lead to short- and long-term health effects, including coma, brain damage and death. Some studies have shown that repeated opioid misuse also can affect people's behavior, decision-making, and responses to stressful situations. So, it's important to be aware of any change in your teen's behavior.

Every Clovis Unified school will hold at least one Family Education Event focused on comprehensive wellness during the 2019-20 school year. The events, sponsored by The Foundation for Clovis Schools, will cover a variety of topics, from technology and screen time, to addiction and emotional wellness, and others. Watch for more information from your local school for an event near you.

You have probably heard a lot about the opioid crisis in the news lately. But what are opioids, and what do they have to do with you as the parent of a teenager?

If your child has had a sports injury, dental work, or surgery, it is possible that he or she was prescribed a pain reliever that contained an opioid. Opioids can be very effective at reducing severe pain in the short term, such as after surgery, but they can be very addictive, especially if they are misused.

Children and adolescents are at greater risk than adults of becoming addicted when exposed to drugs. Particularly when used in treating children or adolescents, opioids should only be taken to manage severe pain, when no other pain medicine works, and for the shortest time necessary—and most importantly, only while under the careful watch of a trained health care provider.

In addition to opioids prescribed for treating pain, there are powerful opioids sold on the street and used solely to get high, including heroin and illicit fentanyl. These are also highly addictive. All opioids—particularly when misused to get high, when combined with other drugs like alcohol or tranquilizers, or when used for pain without proper medical supervision—can result in deadly overdoses.

While opioid misuse in teens has been going down, the rate of opioid misuse increases significantly after the age of 18, so it is critical to talk with teens early and frequently to protect them from experimenting with opioids as they transition into adulthood. Talking to your kids about drugs may not be easy, but it is important.

- Nora D. Volkow, M.D. Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse

The first District-wide Parent Academy is Oct. 15. More at cUSD.com.



Read the entire Parent Guide at
www.drugabuse.gov/publications/opioid

Do opioids show up on a drug test?

Just like other drugs, opioids can show up on a drug test within hours of being taken. Opioids, including heroin, can show up on a drug test for days, and in some cases weeks, after being taken. How long they stay in your system depends on how long a person has been taking the drug, the amount of the drug they use, or the person's metabolism.

I've heard about something called fentanyl. What is that?

Fentanyl is an opioid drug that is 50 times more powerful than heroin. Medically, it is used to treat extreme pain and for surgeries. But now it's being made illegally and is sometimes mixed with other drugs leading to overdose.

Are opioids addictive? Yes. Opioids are among the most addictive drugs.

What are the most commonly used opioids?

The most commonly used prescription opioids are oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), codeine, and morphine. Heroin is an opioid, but it is not a medication. Fentanyl is a powerful prescription pain reliever, but it is sometimes added to heroin by drug dealers, causing doses so strong that people are overdosing.

Can opioid addiction be treated?

Quitting opioids can be hard, but it is possible. There are three FDA-approved medicines to treat opioid addiction. Counseling and therapy are also important to help people stop using opioids, rebuild relationships with friends and family, and build healthy life skills. A combination of behavior therapy and medication has proven to be very effective in treating opioid addiction.

START A CONVERSATION

Because opioids are available by prescription, many children and teens don't understand their danger, and even fewer recognize that heroin is an opioid. Many also do not realize that dangerous fentanyl is added to many street drugs. Misusing opioids can be harmful and can alter the course of young peoples' lives, preventing them from reaching their full potential. That's reason enough to have this difficult conversation with your children. Be certain that the discussion focuses on how much you care about your child's health.

- Be a good listener.
- Set clear expectations about drug and alcohol use, including real consequences for not following family rules.
- Help your child deal with peer pressure to use drugs.
- Get to know your child's friends and their parents.
- If concerned, have your child evaluated for mental health issues such as depression or anxiety.
- Monitor your child's whereabouts.
- Carefully monitor your child's medications.
- Do not leave unused opioids in accessible places in your home.
- Supervise teen activities.
- Talk to your child often.
- Do not ignore signs that your child is changing in negative ways.

If you believe someone you know is struggling with opioid abuse, call the National Drug & Alcohol Abuse Hotline at 844-289-0879, or call your neighborhood school and ask for the school nurse or psychologist.