

## Substance misuse truth

# Opioids and pain pills can be dangerous

### Opioid misuse takes lives

Opioids are a group of powerful medications that relieve pain; however, opioids can be dangerous if they are not used correctly.

Nearly **80%** of heroin users reported misusing prescription opioids prior to heroin.<sup>1</sup>

**116** people a day die from opioid-related drug overdoses.<sup>1</sup>

### Pain all the time? Consider the best ways to manage it.

If you live in pain and take pain medicine, you could become dependent on opioids, pain pills, or other methods of pain management without even realizing it.

### What are opioids?

Opioids, often prescribed for pain, include:<sup>2</sup>

- Fentanyl, a powerful anesthetic, used to manage pain.
- Prescription pain relievers, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, morphine and others.

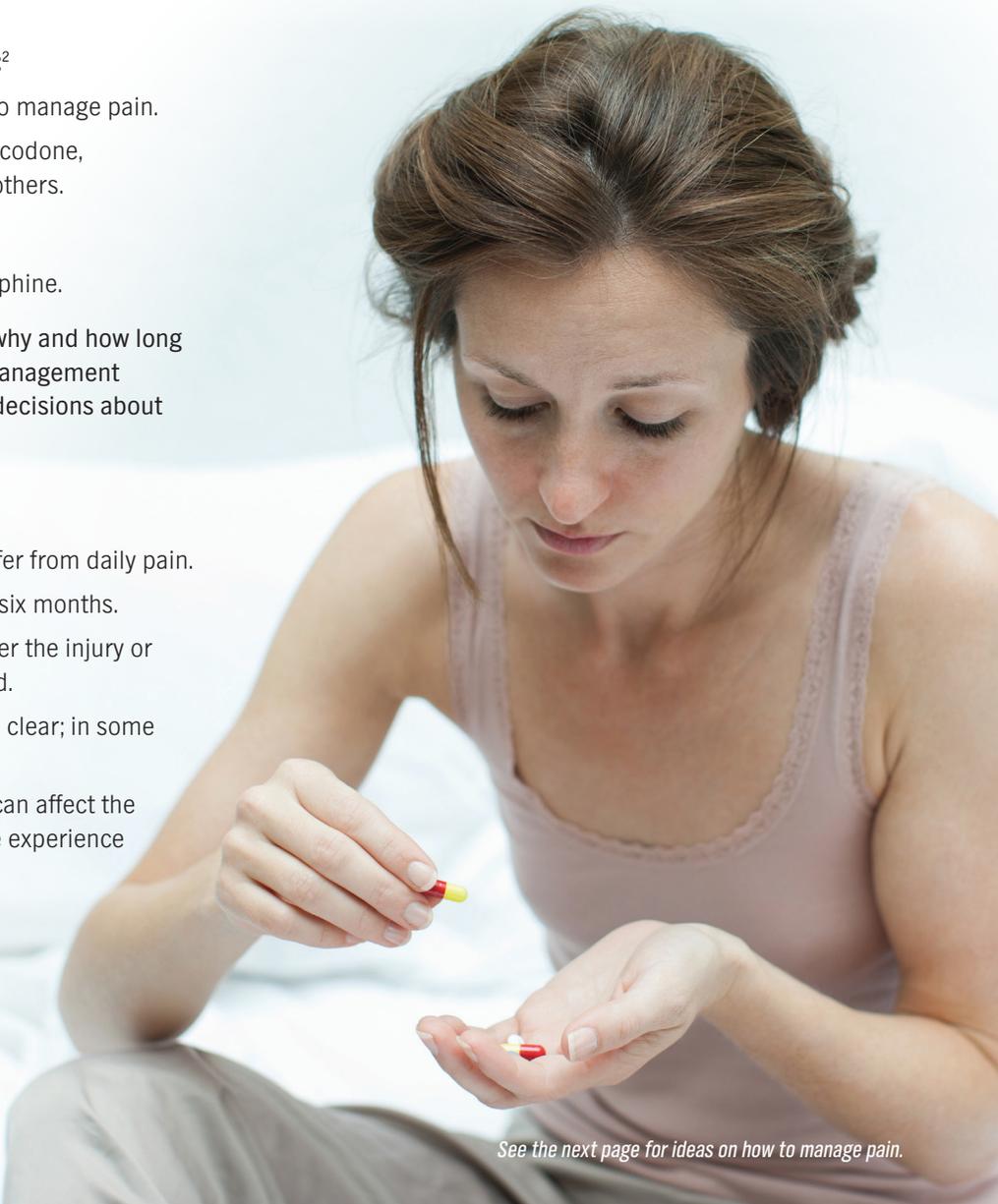
They also include illegal drugs, like:

- Heroin, an opioid drug made from morphine.

Before taking any opioid, ask your doctor why and how long you need to take it, and what other pain management options you have, so you can make smart decisions about treating your pain.

### The truth about chronic pain<sup>3,4,5</sup>

- Some 25.3 million American adults suffer from daily pain.
- It's pain that lasts longer than three to six months.
- In many cases, pain continues even after the injury or condition that first caused it has healed.
- The cause of chronic pain is not always clear; in some cases, it may never be explained.
- While the main symptom is pain, pain can affect the body in different ways. Different people experience chronic pain in different ways.



## Understand the pain cycle

Chronic pain can become a vicious cycle. Here's an example of back pain.<sup>4</sup>



Even though it hurts, it's important to continue moving through pain to stretch and strengthen your muscles. Be sure to follow your doctor's advice for what movement and activity is right for you.

## What are options to manage chronic pain?<sup>6,7</sup>

Treatments for chronic pain include both medicine and activities. No single treatment works for everyone. Be open to trying new treatments and combinations of treatments. Treatment options include:

- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Cognitive behavioral therapy — a goal-directed approach where you learn how to change thought perceptions and behavioral and emotional triggers of pain and stress
- Movement therapy, including physical therapy
- Medications that aren't addictive
- Interventional therapies (injections)
- Exercise (like yoga or Pilates) and weight loss
- Acupuncture
- Massage

## Help any time you need it

National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

You can also contact your company's Employee Assistance Program or Human Resources department about helpful resources available to you.

**Need more help? Speak to your family doctor or other health professional right away if you or someone you know is in constant pain or could be abusing substances.**

1 Department of Health and Human Services: *Help, Resources and Information – National Opioids Crisis* (accessed April 20, 2018): [hhs.gov/opioids](https://hhs.gov/opioids).

2 Department of Health and Human Services: *Prevention – What are Opioids?* (accessed April 20, 2018): [hhs.gov/opioids/prevention/index.html](https://hhs.gov/opioids/prevention/index.html).

3 Institute for Chronic Pain: *What is Chronic Pain?* (rev. October 23, 2015): [instituteforchronicpain.org](http://instituteforchronicpain.org).

4 Brainworks: *Contain Your Pain: Breaking the Pain Cycle* (October 31, 2010): [brainworksrehab.com](http://brainworksrehab.com).

5 National Institutes of Health: *NIH analysis shows Americans are in pain* (August 11, 2015): [nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-analysis-shows-americans-are-pain](https://nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-analysis-shows-americans-are-pain).

6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: *Know Your Options* (August 29, 2017): [cdc.gov/drugoverdose/patients/options.html](https://cdc.gov/drugoverdose/patients/options.html).

7 See your benefits certificate for what therapies and services are covered in your plan.

This information is meant to educate, not serve as medical advice. See your doctor for medical advice about your health.

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