



Opioid Education Toolkit


Revised 2026


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💔 The United States is facing a crisis in drug misuse and addiction. Drug overdose deaths are a continuing public health burden involving every demographic - in the 12-month period ending in December 2024, the US reported 80,391 drug overdose deaths.¹

💔 In Florida, 7,220 drug overdose deaths occurred in the same timeframe.¹ This represents a 21.5% decrease in overdose deaths from the same period in 2023.

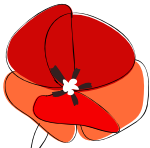
 Overdose deaths in the US have decreased 26.9% from 2023 to 2024.¹

 This marks the largest single-year drop in overdose deaths since the epidemic began. The decline is attributed to expanded access to naloxone, improved addiction treatment, and strategic use of opioid settlement funds for prevention and recovery efforts.²

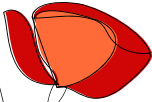
 In 2024, about 80,000 individuals died from a drug overdose across the nation and approximately 68% involved an opioid.³

Opiates vs. Opioids: What is the difference? 4

Both drug names are often used interchangeably, but the differences are slight.

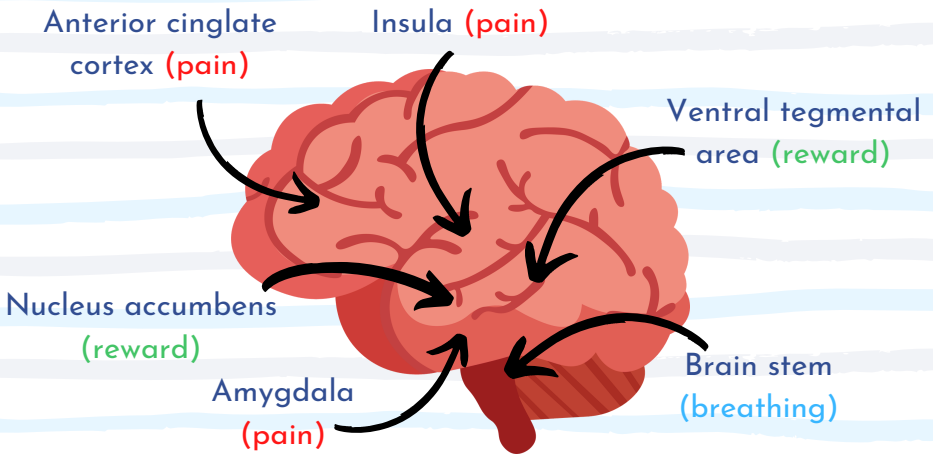


Opiates are naturally derived from the poppy plant (opium), and include heroin, morphine & codeine.



Opioids include all opiates as well as synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, methadone, and meperidine (Demerol).

After use, opioids travel through the bloodstream to the brain, and attach to specialized opioid receptors triggering feelings of reward, relaxation & extreme happiness within the mesolimbic reward system. This can lead to addiction.



What are the Signs of Opioid Use?

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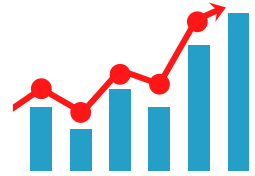
Opioid use can cause hypoxia, a condition where too little oxygen is able to reach the brain.

High doses can cause potential neurological and psychological damage including irreversible brain damage, coma, and even death.⁸



Other symptoms include small, constricted pupils, cold, pale or blue skin, loss of consciousness, shallow breathing, choking sounds and a limp body.⁹

Tolerance: Occurs when the same dose of the drug produces diminishing effects or a steadily larger dose is needed to produce the same effect.



Dependence: When a person discontinues the use of a drug the body may experience withdrawal symptoms; a group of physical and psychological symptoms ranging from mild to life-threatening.

Addiction: Unlike tolerance and dependence, addiction is a disease that manifests from using drug(s) to the point that the person simply can not stop regardless of negative consequences.

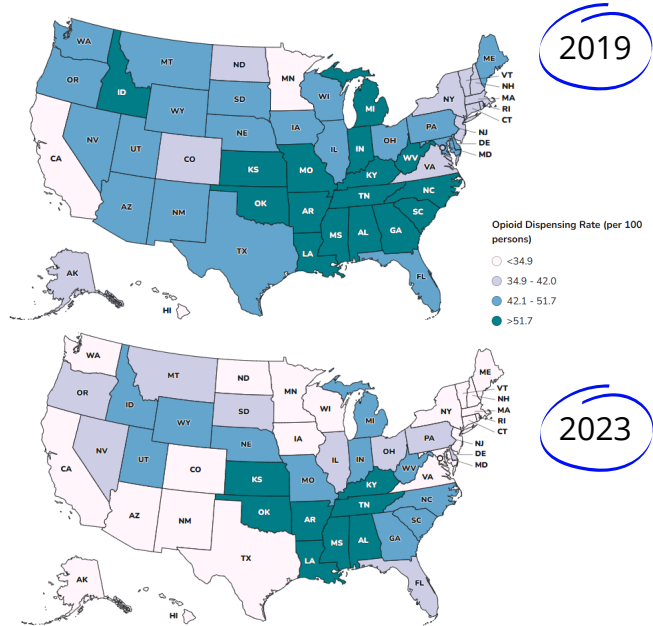
Between 1999-2021 drug overdose deaths involving opioids accounted for over 645,000 deaths - this includes prescription and illicit (illegally made) opioids.³

First Wave: Began in the 1990s with overdose deaths involving prescription opioids.³

Second Wave: Began in 2010 with overdose deaths rapidly increasing due to heroin.³

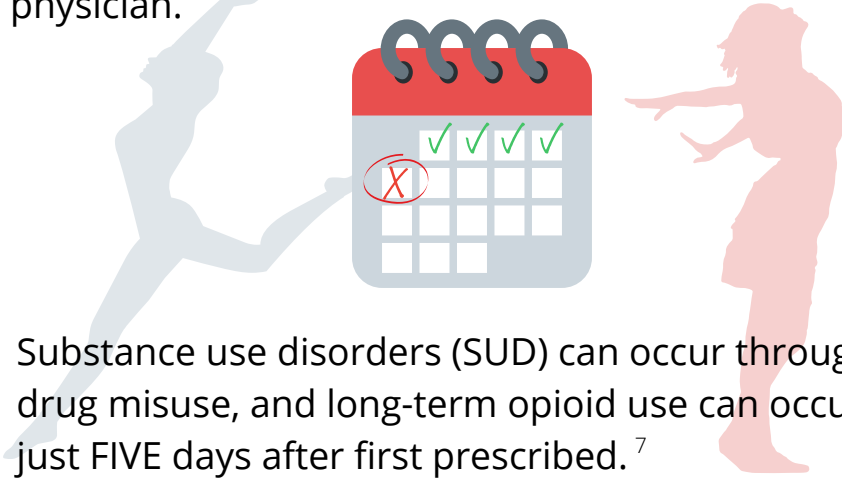
Third Wave: Began in 2013 with the increase in illicitly manufactured synthetic opioids, including fentanyl.³

**OPIOID
DISPENSING
RATES
CONTINUE
TO
DECREASE.**



As of the most recent CDC update, the national opioid dispensing rate in the United States was 37.5 prescriptions per 100 persons in 2023, continuing a steady decline from 46.8 per 100 persons in 2019.⁴

Prescription medications can provide favorable treatment outcomes when used as directed by your physician.



Substance use disorders (SUD) can occur through drug misuse, and long-term opioid use can occur just FIVE days after first prescribed.⁷


Opioid exposure during pregnancy has been linked to poor health for both mothers and babies.

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)


Opioid use during pregnancy can lead to neonatal abstinence syndrome in some newborns. NAS is a group of conditions that can occur when newborns withdraw from certain substances, including opioids, that they were exposed to before birth.⁵

Plans of Safe Care

Every pregnancy is unique. Whether or not this is your first pregnancy reach out to your local community health department to discuss what programs are available to you at no cost to ensure the best outcomes for your new family.⁶

 Creating a treatment plan for opioid use disorder, that may include a medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) such as methadone or buprenorphine, before pregnancy can help increase the chances of a healthy pregnancy.⁶



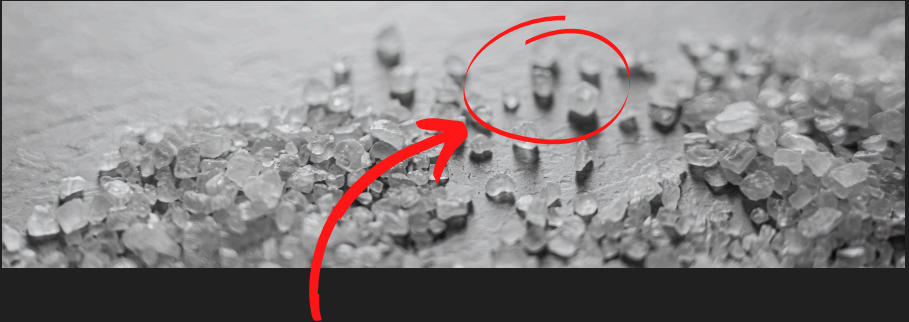
 Some people may need to take an opioid medication during pregnancy to manage pain. Quickly stopping opioids during pregnancy is not recommended, as it can have serious consequences, including preterm labor, fetal distress, or miscarriage. When making decisions about whether to begin opioids for chronic pain during pregnancy, healthcare providers and patients together should carefully weigh risks and benefits.

The Dangers of Fentanyl

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Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid nearly **50-100 times** more potent than morphine and is used to treat severe pain primarily after surgical procedures.¹⁰

Carfentanil is a fentanyl-related substance that is **10,000** times more potent than morphine, **100** times more potent than fentanyl.



It can only take 2 to 3 milligrams of fentanyl, or the same size as 5 to 7 grains of table salt, to induce respiratory depression or arrest and even death.¹³

The Dangers of Fentanyl

Often, illicit fentanyl or fentanyl analogs are sold on the street in a form resembling OxyContin or Xanax.¹² In 2022, the DEA seized more than 58.3 million fentanyl-laced fake pills, and over 13,000 pounds of fentanyl powder. These total seizures are equivalent to over 387.9 MILLION lethal doses of fentanyl.

Authentic Oxycodone



Fake Oxycodone



Authentic Xanax



Fake Xanax





What does a lethal dose of fentanyl look like?¹⁵



DEA



A lethal dose of heroin (left), carfentanil (middle) and fentanyl (right).¹⁵

Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths, and are being mixed with other opioid and non-opioid drugs like cocaine, methamphetamine, and MDMA (*Ecstasy*). This is very dangerous as people are often unaware that fentanyl has been added.¹³



Illicit drugs may even contain the animal tranquilizer Xylazine which can cause severe tissue damage in individuals who inject drugs. Xylazine, in addition to fentanyl, is often used as a cutting agent in many illicit drugs because it is cheaper for the drug dealer regardless of the deadly risks to the buyer.

Behind the Counter: Grey-Market Substances

Substance	Description
Kratom	Plant-based opioid
7-OH (7-hydroxymitragynine)	Kratom alkaloid
Bromazolam	Designer benzodiazepine
Muscarine	Mushroom toxin/hallucinogen
Delta-8 THC	Synthetic cannabinoid
Phenibut	GABA analog
Tianeptine	Antidepressant (off-label), Opioid effects
DPT (Dipropyltryptamine)	Synthetic psychedelic
U-47700 ("Pink")	Synthetic opioid

Behind the Counter: Grey-Market Substances

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Why It Matters

- These substances lack safety testing.
- They may contain many other hazardous compounds.
- Young people might assume they are “safe” simply because they are legal or easily accessible.
- Overdoses and fatalities have been reported due to substances such as U-47700 and DPT.

Where are these products often found?

- Smoke Shops
- Gas Stations
- Online Vendors
- Social Media Platforms
- Dark web marketplaces



SMALL, CONSTRICTED "PINPOINT" PUPILS

SLOW, SHALLOW BREATHING

CHOKING OR GURGLING SOUNDS

FALLING ASLEEP OR LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

PALE, BLUE, OR COLD SKIN

LIMP BODY

CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY

ADMINISTER NALOXONE (IF AVAILABLE)

KEEP THE PERSON AWAKE AND BREATHING

**LAY THE PERSON ON THEIR SIDE TO PREVENT
CHOKING**

**STAY WITH THE INDIVIDUAL UNTIL
EMERGENCY MEDICAL STAFF ARRIVE**

Stigma is a broad term describing the negative and stereotypical attitudes, feelings, and thoughts on an individual or group of people based on their traits (inherited or otherwise) such as skin color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or mental illness. Attitudes are often supported by ignorance, prejudice, and discrimination.

Stigma can lead to many negative outcomes for individuals experiencing substance use. Help may be available to individuals with SUDs, however, they may feel unworthy to accept it because of the constant pressures of stigma.

Help end stigma by visiting [Shatterproof.org/stigma](https://shatterproof.org/stigma):



Terms like "addict, junkie, druggie" are demeaning and dehumanizing. Using first names can foster human connection, and if first names are unknown you can simply refer to someone as "friend."

Change stigmatizing terminology to inclusive terminology.

Interactions should come from a place of care - not blame.

Break the silence and advocate for change.

Normalize medication assisted therapies.

Changing your language does not mean you are changing your belief system.



Opioid misuse can happen to any person regardless of their income, age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual preference or career.

Dispose of Medications Properly.

Medication take-back centers are publicly available throughout Pinellas County for safe disposal of unwanted, expired, or unused medications, and many are located within pharmacy chains such as Walgreens or CVS!

Special events are also held to dispose of medications, such as Operation Medicine Cabinet & the DEA National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day.

These services are FREE to use!

A naloxone distribution program puts the antidote directly into the hands of those most likely to witness an overdose and respond first: substance users, their families, outreach workers, and even the police.

You can get naloxone at no-cost at any one of these Pinellas County locations:

Naloxone kits are available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday - Friday:

- St. Petersburg – 205 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St. N, St. Pete
- Pinellas Park – 6350 76th Ave. N., Pinellas Park
- Mid County – 8751 Ulmerton Rd., Largo
- Clearwater – 310 N. Myrtle Ave., Clearwater
- Tarpon Springs – 301 S. Disston Ave., Tarpon Springs (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday only)

In 2019, the Infectious Disease Elimination Act (IDEA) became law. It allows sterile needle and syringe exchange programs to legally operate in Florida preventing communicable disease spread, and providing free testing, counseling, and many additional resources for individuals in need.

Since opening their doors in February 2023, IDEA Exchange Pinellas has safely collected and responsibly disposed of over 150,000 used needles!

Services provided at IDEA Exchange Pinellas are anonymous and no-cost.



Location: 1525 16th Street South, St. Pete

Hours: Mon/Wed/Fri 10am to 3pm

Phone: 727-954-3993

Email: info@ideapinellas.org

The use of local and social media is an important resource when raising awareness about your campaign or advocacy group.

Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube make up some of the most identifiable and commonly accessed platforms.



Make sure your prevention campaign materials are easy to read, are understandable to your targeted audience, and are based on current peer reviewed research.

The **Pinellas County Opioid Task Force** is a collaboration of community partners responding to the sharp increase in opioid-related drug abuse and deaths in the county.

Participants recruited for the task force are individuals from key organizations and the community that have a vested interest in the reduction of opioid use in the county.



To learn more about the Task Force scan the QR code provided.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
www.cdc.gov

DEA Office of Diversion Control Registration Call Center:
[1-800-882-9539](tel:1-800-882-9539)

Drug Free America Foundation: www.dfaf.org

ISaveFL (Find Naloxone): www.ISaveFL.com

**Narcotics Overdose Prevention and Educations (NOPE)
Task Force:** www.nopepinellas.org

National Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator:
<https://findtreatment.gov>

National Treatment Referral Helpline:
[1-800-662-HELP \(4357\)](tel:1-800-662-HELP) or [1-800-487-4889 \(TDD\)](tel:1-800-487-4889)

**Operation Medicine Cabinet:
www.pinellassheriff.gov/OMC**

**Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County
(Resource Guide):**

<https://pinellas.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/wellness-programs/substance-use-prevention/resources/index.html>

**Pinellas Wellness Connection (YouGood?):
<https://pinellaswellnessconnection.org/>
727-791-3131**

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
Administration (SAMHSA):
www.samhsa.gov**

**White House Office of National Drug Control Policy
(ONDCP): www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp**

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Images curated from online public access sites, including Google, ClipArt, and other open source sites.

Special Thanks

Our fight against the opioid epidemic involves the continuing commitment from all of our community partners. Special thanks to the DOH-Pinellas Office of Public Health Preparedness, General Services, and DOH-Hillsborough in translating this toolkit to expand access to serve our multilingual learners.

Pinellas County

Opioid
TASK FORCE



*thank
you*

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