

Opioid Misuse and Overdose Glossary of Terms

The following terms and brief definitions are often used in prevention efforts for opioid misuse and overdose. They assist in providing a starting point for using a common language to address opioid misuse and related problems and potential solutions.

- **Benzodiazepines:** Class of drug used mainly as tranquilizers to control symptoms of anxiety. Like opioids, benzodiazepines depress breathing. Taking opioids and benzodiazepines together can increase the risk for overdose.
- **Buprenorphine:** A medication used to treat pain and opioid dependence.
- **Doctor Shopping:** Visiting multiple health care providers to obtain multiple (four or more) prescriptions for medications during a single illness episode or for treating a continuous illness.
- **Drug dependence:** A need for repeated doses of a drug to feel good or to avoid feeling bad.
- **Drug Misuse:** The use of a substance for a purpose not consistent with legal or medical guidelines.
- **Fentanyl:** A powerful synthetic opioid pain reliever similar to morphine but stronger than both morphine and heroin. Sometimes mixed with street heroin or cocaine to increase euphoric effects, it is known as a possible cause for the increase in accidental overdose deaths (See *Synthetic Opioids*).
- **First Responders:** Individuals who may respond and provide care to a person experiencing an overdose, including but not limited to: emergency medical services personnel, fire department personnel, and law enforcement officers. Lay first responders are bystanders who first recognize an overdose emergency and may include fellow substance users, roommates, friends and family members.
- **Good Samaritan Laws:** Laws that provide criminal, civil, or professional liability protections for individuals responding to an overdose.
- **Heroin:** Highly addictive illegal opiate that creates a surge of euphoria; processed from morphine, it can potentially cause slow respiratory distress, coma, or death.
- **Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT):** Integrates medications (e.g., methadone, buprenorphine, or naltrexone) with behavioral therapies and medications to treat substance use disorders.
- **Methadone:** An opioid pain medication that is used for maintenance therapy in people with opioid dependence (See *Synthetic Opioids*).

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- **Naloxone:** Medication (opioid antagonist) administered to rapidly reverse opioid overdose. Naloxone is commonly sold under the brand names Narcan® and Evzio®. It is available through injectors, auto-injectors, and nasal sprays.
- **Narcan:** Brand name of the medication naloxone.
- **Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs:** Use of prescription opioids for reasons or in ways other than as prescribed, or without a prescription.
- **Opiate:** Naturally-occurring substance that produces euphoria, derived from opium, a poppy plant.
- **Opioid Addiction:** A chronic disease characterized by uncontrollable cravings for and use of opioids, despite the potential harm to self or others. If formally diagnosed, this disease may be called *opioid use disorder*.
- **Opioid Antagonist:** Medication that blocks the body's opioid receptors in order to prevent interactions with opioids in the body. Administration of an opioid antagonist, like naloxone, can halt an overdose before its potentially fatal symptoms, such as respiratory depression, take full effect.
- **Opioids:** Class of drugs that includes heroin and prescription pain relievers. Opioids are often prescribed after surgery or injury, or to relieve cancer pain. Common types of opioids include oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), morphine, fentanyl, and methadone.
- **Oxycodone:** An opioid medication that is used to treat moderate to severe pain.
- **Pharmacy Hopping:** Also known as pharmacy shopping; visiting multiple pharmacies to fill multiple (four or more) prescriptions, often using cash to avoid the insurance system. Often indicates such health-related problems as lack of care coordination and addiction.
- **Pill Mill:** A doctor, pain clinic, or pharmacy that indiscriminately prescribes or dispenses controlled prescription drugs
- **Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs):** Electronic databases that track and house data on prescriptions and dispensations of controlled substances with the purpose of preventing individuals from receiving medically unnecessary prescriptions that may be abused or cause overdoses.
- **Synthetic Opioids:** Opioids created chemically in a laboratory (fentanyl, methadone, meperidine (Demerol®)).
- **Tapentadol:** A type of opioid pain medication.
- **Tolerance:** The body's ability to process and experience the effects of a certain amount of a substance. As opioid use increases or decreases, so too does a person's level of tolerance to opioids.