Opioid Use Prevention

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Opioid refers to an entire class of prescription and non-prescription drugs. Opioids are strong depressants that bind to brain receptors and block pain signals. Hydrocodone, oxycodone, codeine, morphine, methadone, heroin, and fentanyl are all types of opioids.

Prescription opioids are intended to manage acute and short-term pain, and should only be taken under the direction of a physician. **Opioid misuse** occurs when pain pills are taken without medical supervision or taken for non-medical reasons. This includes taking a higher dosage and using someone else's medication. Opioid misuse can lead to addiction or a fatal overdose.

Since these powerful and highly addictive substances are capable of chemically altering the brain's reward system, dependence can develop in less than a week. Early signs of an **opioid use disorder (OUD)** include mood and personality changes, irregular habits and routines, increased cravings, and withdrawal symptoms.

12% of college students report using prescription pain relievers for nonmedical purposes in their lifetime, with 7% reporting nonmedical use in the past year and 3% in the past month

Source: Stover et al., 2019

Pain pills are commonly obtained by selling, trading, or giving away medications to friends and peers

Source: SAMHSA's Preventing Prescription Abuse in the Workplace Technical Assistance Center

College students report using prescription opioids to induce sleep, reduce pain, self-medicate, experiment, and get high

Source: SAMHSA's Preventing Prescription Abuse in the Workplace Technical Assistance Center

Prescription opioid misuse among college students is linked to illicit drug use, including heroin; cigarette smoking; and heavy episodic drinking

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020

Those most at risk for prescription opioid misuse include white males with a history of substance use and students with higher rates of psychological distress, depressive symptoms, and suicidal thoughts

Source: Weyandt et al., 2020

Although students can feel pressured by **college culture** to engage in social/recreational opioid use, this behavior can be a barrier to academic success and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, affect life after graduation and future employment, and lead to adverse health consequences, including:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Constipation
- Slowed breathing
- Drowsiness
- Sleep disruptions
- Muscle and bone pain

Get involved with existing opioid prevention and intervention programs on campus or advocate for strategies to protect against the dangers of opioid use, such as:

- Teach students, faculty, and staff how to administer naloxone
- Designate locations for naloxone kits, including parking garages, residence halls, and defibrillator boxes
- Establish a university policy to make naloxone available through health services and campus police

HOW TO RECOGNIZE AN OVERDOSE

Signs of an overdose include sleep-like state, changes in appearance, trouble breathing, and low heart rate. If you notice any of these signs, remember to A.C.T.

Administer Naloxone
Call 911
Trust the Good Samaritan Law

SAFE AND PROPER DRUG DISPOSAL

To keep yourself and others safe from opioid misuse, dispose of all expired and leftover medications at a local Drug Drop Box. Find locations at the link below.

stoprxabuseinga.org

24/7 Georgia Crisis & Access Line
1-800-715-4225

opioidresponse.info

D·B·H·D·D

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities
State Opioid Response