



## What to do if you suspect someone may be addicted to prescription painkillers

Opioid painkillers are medications for treating pain that can be very addicting. Most people who are prescribed these medications do not develop a problem. Some, however, can become addicted even when they are taken for a legitimate pain problem. While opioids have an effect that reduces the feeling of pain, they also have a very strong impact on the way the brain works that may set up an ongoing desire or craving for more of the medication. Some people who have become addicted to painkillers never took them with any intention of becoming dependent or starting to abuse them.

### What you should know about opioids

Many people who get addicted to opioids did not feel high when they took them but did feel:

- Increased energy
- More confident
- Smarter
- More relaxed
- Less depressed

You can begin to develop a tolerance to opioid pain pills in a very short time frame- even just a few doses. This means that as time goes on you will need more of the medicine to feel the same benefit.

### Who is more likely to become addicted to opioid pain medications

There is no way to predict who will become addicted to painkillers, however certain things increase your risk including:

- Personal or family history of addiction or substance abuse
- Having participated in several treatment programs for addiction
- Suffers from depression or anxiety
- Long term use of prescription opioids

### When to talk with your doctor or contact your employee assistance program (EAP)

You should be concerned about your potential to become addicted:

- If you start thinking about taking more than currently prescribed
- If you are taking the painkillers when you don't need it for pain anymore
- If you are accessing more painkiller medication from another source beside your physician
- If you ever crush, chew, snort, or inject your pain medicine, then you already have a problem and you need to speak with your doctor or get help immediately.

If you find yourself doing any of these things, talk to your doctor immediately. Your provider may recommend a specialist to assess your situation.

Nearly 2 million people are currently addicted to opioid pain relievers in the United States.

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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, (2012) Results from The 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings, NSDUH Series H-44, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 12-4713. Rockville, MD. Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/nsduh/2k11results/nsduhresults2011.htm>