

Opioids Fact Sheet

Common Opioids:

- Codeine, morphine, Dilaudid, oxycodone/Percodan, Duragesic, Demerol, Talwin, Darvon, Heroin

Description/Overview

- Made from the opium poppy, or can be synthetically produced
- Functions as an analgesic (pain killers)
- Have a depressant effect on the central nervous system
- Can be taken orally, snorted, smoked, injected, or through a transdermal (skin) patch;
- Well known as drug of abuse due to psychoactive properties and ability to induce euphoria

Short Term Effects

- Lasting feeling of relaxation and calmness; intense pleasure
- Drowsiness, warmth, detachment from pain and anxiety, a sense of well-being and contentment
- Nausea and vomiting, constipation,
- Constricted pupils, blurred vision, poor night vision,
- Sweating and itchy skin
- Low dose may suppress coughs, cause dizziness or light headedness, reduce mental alertness or mild anxiety
- High dose may include increased sedation, reduced respiration and blood pressure, and possibly rapid and irregular heart rate

Long Term Effects

- Depression, nightmares and sleep disturbances
- Disordered thinking problems with concentration, brain damage
- Constipation, visual impairments (reduced night vision, blurriness)
- Lung complications, liver damage
- Injection related issues (scarred/collapsed veins, bacterial infections, abscesses, blood borne viruses)

Dependence Potential

- *Tolerance* (needing more and more of the drug to feel the same effects) develops rapidly where feelings of euphoria are no longer attainable and people report having to continue taking the opioids solely to function and feel normal
- May become *psychological* and *physical dependence*
- Dependence associated with “loss of control”, such as using medication more rapidly than prescribed

Withdrawal

Non – life threatening but can produce high levels of discomfort. Symptoms include:

- Cravings, runny nose, weakness, , yawning,
- Profuse sweating, nausea, vomiting, muscle spasms, stomach cramps
- Chills, irritability, diarrhea, severe anxiety
- Can occur four to five hours after last use
- Acute withdrawal systems last between 7 to 10 days, but may last 6 months before completely through withdrawal symptoms
- Under medical supervision, tapering off the opioid can help ease withdrawal symptoms
- Methadone maintenance treatment is recommended best practice approach for people dependent on opioids