

# WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?



## BY DEFINITION

Naturally found in the opium poppy plant, opioids are a class of drug that chemically interacts with opioid receptors on the nerve cells in the body and brain. They produce a variety of effects, including relieving pain from things like dental surgery, sports injuries, or cancer.

## BY NAME

Opioids can be prescription medications most known as "pain killers", or illicit drugs, such as heroin.

The most commonly used opioids are:

- Prescriptions opioids such as OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet
  - Synthetic opioids such as fentanyl (50/100x more potent than morphine)
  - Heroin, an illicit drug



## BY FUNCTION

Opioids produce a euphoria in addition to pain relief, while they tell the brain to block pain receptors and make you feel calm and happy also.



Southeast (HHS Region 4)

**ATTC**

Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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## BY EFFECT

### Short Term Effects:

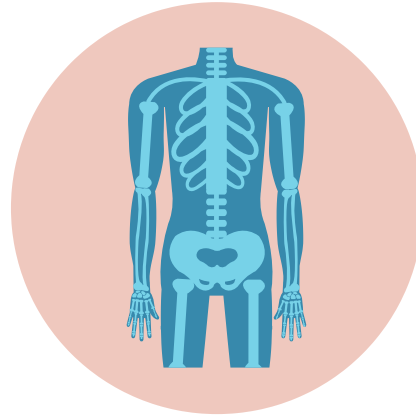
- Feeling of calm, sleepiness, confusion
- Constipation
- Nausea
- Slowed/stopped breathing (can cause overdose)

### Long Term Effects:

- Addiction
- Tolerance
- Dependence
- Heart and/or Lung Infection
- Muscle Pain

### Injecting Effects

- Heart and/or Lung Infection
- HIV Infection
- Hepatitis B and/or C Infection



## BY MISUSE

When used for short periods of time as directed by your doctor, opioids can safely help control pain, but being effective at treating pain can also make them dangerous. When misused they can lead to tolerance (needing increased amounts for same effect), addiction, overdose incidents, and deaths.

## IF SOMEONE NEEDS HELP

Go to [samhsa.gov/find-help](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help) for a listing of treatment programs and resources. Remember, treatment is available and people can get better.



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