

MEDICATION-ASSISTED TREATMENT

An eBook for Parents & Caregivers of
Teens & Young Adults Addicted to Opioids

Is your teen or young adult addicted to opioids such as prescription painkillers or heroin? Medication-assisted treatment may be helpful for your child.

This eBook will help you learn more about medication-assisted treatment – what it is, how it’s used, where to find it and how you can best support your child through treatment.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: IS YOUR CHILD ADDICTED TO OPIOIDS?

Do You Have A Teenager or Young Adult Addicted to Opioids? 3

One Option is Medication-Assisted Treatment..... 3

Treatment Can Help Your Child Overcome Addiction 3

Understanding the Teen and Young-Adult Brain..... 4

Opioids Q&A..... 5

How Does Opioid Addiction Occur?..... 7

Tolerance, Dependence and Withdrawal..... 8

4 Common Risk Factors Associated with Teen Drug and Alcohol Abuse [chart] 8

GETTING HELP FOR AN OPIOID ADDICTION

Opioid Addiction: A Chronic Disease 9

Stopping Opioid Use 10

Medication-Assisted Treatment Can Help Reduce Cravings and Withdrawal 11

Cravings and Triggers 12

Withdrawal Symptoms 12

Misunderstandings About Medication-Assisted Treatment 13

Medication Options for Treating Opioid Dependence 14

Medications for Treating Opioid Dependence [chart] 15

Where to Find Medication-Assisted Treatment for Your Child 16

The Opioid Treatment Program Directory 16

Suboxone Doctor Locator 16

HOW MEDICATION-ASSISTED TREATMENT WORKS

Assessment 17

How Treatment Begins 18

Goals in Medication-Assisted Treatment [chart] 19

Length of Treatment 20

Benefits of Counseling..... 21

Family Therapy 21

Support 22

Preventing Relapse 23

FAMILY: A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF RECOVERY

Involving the Family 24

How Family Can Help 24

Monitoring Your Child’s Behavior 25

Supervising Your Child’s Medication 25

Warnings About Medications [chart] 26

Monitor, Secure, Dispose of the Medicine in Your Home 26

CONCLUSION: RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE

Your Child Can Get Better 29

Glossary 31

Additional Resources 34

Parents Helping Parents 35

Notes 36

INTRODUCTION: IS YOUR CHILD ADDICTED TO OPIOIDS?

i NOTE: Words appearing in italics are defined in the glossary on page 31.

Do You Have A Teenager Or Young Adult Addicted To Opioids?

Opioids are prescription painkillers — like OxyContin, Percocet and Vicodin — as well as the street drug heroin.

One of the most important things you can do to help your child is to educate yourself about opioid abuse and addiction and what options there are for treatment.

One Option is Medication-Assisted Treatment

Medication-assisted treatment is the use of medication, along with therapy and other supports, to help address issues related to opioid dependence, including withdrawal, cravings and relapse prevention.

Treatment Can Help Your Child Overcome Addiction

Addiction is a chronic brain disease that distorts a person's thinking, feelings and perceptions. It is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences. Addiction can be devastating for the person addicted and everyone




"My son has an addiction to opioids. Over the course of five years, he'd been in six or seven different treatment programs and lived in a number of halfway houses. He kept relapsing and at times was close to dying from this disease. I thought I was going to lose him. About two years ago, after completing a nine-month program and relapsing again, he called me crying and said, 'Dad, I don't know why I'm doing this to myself.' He really wanted to stop. He then began Suboxone treatment. The Suboxone reduced his cravings and helped him manage his addiction. It has allowed him to lead a normal, productive life. He's become a mature, honest young man, and while he still has his struggles, he's not using drugs and has become a young man that I'm proud of."

— Mark, father of Alex, age 26

who loves him or her. Professional help and evidenced-based treatment are often needed to successfully overcome addiction and maintain long-term recovery. Teens and young adults who are abusing substances frequently need to address other issues, such as trouble in school and difficulty with mood or attention, so it is important to have a comprehensive approach to treatment.

Many teens and young adults overcome opioid addiction and regain normal, healthy lives. Medication-assisted treatment is one approach that might help your child.

 Before we learn more about medication-assisted treatment, let's first find out about the teen brain and how opioid addiction occurs.

Understanding the Teen and Young-Adult Brain

The human brain is developing until about age 25. The teen brain has a strong impulse to seek pleasure and less ability to consider the consequences, so teens are especially vulnerable when it comes to the temptations of drugs and alcohol. And because their internal reward systems are still being developed, teens' ability to bounce back to normal after abusing drugs may be compromised due to how drugs affect the brain. If a person starts using drugs early in life, it can cause changes to the brain's structure and function. The brain can recover if a person stops using opioids, but that recovery can take months — or even years.



“With a strong motivated family, a treatment system that sees to medication and psychiatric care and social supports, there is tremendous hope — no child has to be lost.”

— Dr. John Knight, Director of the Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research at Boston Children's Hospital

Addiction to opioids impacts the brain more severely than addiction to other substances. Habitual long-term use of opioids, including heroin and prescription painkillers, results in intense physical cravings for continued use of more opioids.

Tolerance, Dependence and Withdrawal

Drugs of abuse overload the body with dopamine — in other words, they cause the reward system to send too many “feel-good” signals. In response, the body’s brain systems try to right the balance by letting fewer of the “feel-good” signals through. As time goes on, the body needs more of the drug to feel the same effects as before. This is known as tolerance.

People can also develop a dependence on opioids, which means they feel sick if there are no opioids in the body. This sickness, called withdrawal, can cause many unpleasant and painful symptoms.

4 COMMON RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH TEEN DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE



Several decades of research shows that some teens are more at risk for developing a substance abuse problem than other teens. Understanding risk factors is very important when a child with more risk has already experimented with substances or has a problem. Knowing the risk factors will give you a clearer picture of why certain things might have happened and how to get the right kind of treatment.

FAMILY HISTORY: Family history of drug or alcohol problems, especially when it is the parent’s history, can place a child at increased risk for developing a problem.

MENTAL OR BEHAVIORAL DISORDER: If your child has a psychiatric condition like depression, anxiety or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), he or she is more at risk for developing a drug or alcohol problem.

TRAUMA: Children who have a history of traumatic events (such as witnessing or experiencing a car accident or natural disaster; being a victim of physical or sexual abuse) have been shown to be more at risk for substance use problems later in life.

IMPULSE CONTROL PROBLEMS: Children who frequently take risks or have difficulty controlling impulses are more at risk for substance use problems.

LEARN MORE ABOUT RISK FACTORS:

<http://www.drugfree.org/think-child-using/is-your-teen-at-risk-for-drug-use/>

http://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/partnership_components_tool_revised_031612.pdf

Source: [6 Parenting Practices](#)

GETTING HELP FOR AN OPIOID ADDICTION

Opioid Addiction: A Chronic Disease

“If people can think of this as a disease, it’s no different than having a child with severe ADHD – you get them on medication but at the same time you provide them with the tools to compensate for some of things they have issues with.” — Carol Allen, teacher, and mother of teen committed to recovery

Opioid addiction is a chronic disease, like ADHD, diabetes or asthma. It may last for life. While it may not be cured, it can be managed. As Carol says, helping a young person with addiction to opioids is much like helping a child with any chronic condition. They may need medical treatment, as well as tools for living with the condition.

When someone is diagnosed with a chronic disease such as diabetes or heart disease, a doctor may prescribe medication such as insulin or statins and often recommend lifestyle changes such as more exercise and a healthier diet. Treating opioid addiction also can involve a combination of medication, therapy and lifestyle changes.

The good news is that there are a variety of effective treatments for opioid addiction that will allow a person to return to a life that is healthy and addiction-free. This process is called recovery.



Carol Allen and her husband before their daughter's high-school graduation

Stopping Opioid Use

Most people are unable to stop taking drugs “cold turkey.” Substance abuse treatment providers and doctors can help young people stop using the drug they are addicted to, control their cravings and get them through withdrawal. While many people would like to recover from long-term opioid addiction without the help of medication, they often find they relapse — go back to using drugs — if they do not receive medication-assisted treatment.

Treatment also helps people deal with underlying issues related to their addiction, such as negative feelings about themselves or bad situations at home or school.

A specialist treating a teen or young adult for an opioid addiction will probably suggest a comprehensive approach. This means that in addition to tailoring medications to help address your child’s cravings during detoxification and withdrawal, the specialist will likely suggest therapy or counseling as well. A therapist or counselor will help address behavioral issues, support your child’s recovery and prevent relapse. Family therapy is especially effective for teens and young adults to address substance abuse and other issues.

In addition, if your child has been diagnosed with depression, anxiety, ADHD, bipolar disorder or another co-occurring disorder, your doctor may prescribe medicine to treat that condition as well.

Learn more about treatment for teens and young adults in [Partnership for Drug-Free Kids' Treatment eBook](#).



“Remission or recovery, which I use synonymously, are goals that can be met by many patients by a variety of different treatments.”

— Dr. Edwin A. Salsitz,
Medical Director, Office-Based
Opioid Therapy at Beth Israel
Medical Center

Medication-Assisted Treatment Can Help Reduce Cravings and Withdrawal

Medication-assisted treatment is often a good choice for young people battling opioid addiction. “My advice to parents and teens is to check out medication,” says Dr. Knight. “If it’s available to you, it could be life-saving. It could make the difference and help your child turn the corner and find sobriety.”

Medication-assisted treatment can help a person stop thinking constantly about the problem drug, and help reduce cravings and withdrawal. This allows the person to focus on returning to a healthy lifestyle.

“One way of understanding addiction to opioids is thinking of it as riding a chemical highway, driving a Porsche,” suggests Dr. Josh Hersh, Suboxone Certified Physician, Staff Psychiatrist at Miami University Student Counseling Service. “You’re driving erratically miles and miles down this chemical highway, and while you’re driving down the chemical highway you’re making a lot of changes to the brain,” he says. “Your brain, after you’ve traveled months or years down this chemical highway, is very different. Your brain is reliant on opioids and has...lots of changes that are involved in this disease of addiction.”

To recover, a person has to travel back the other way. Dr. Hersh compares medication-assisted treatment to driving a minivan. “You’re driving safely back, and that takes time. You’ve got to head back slowly and it could take months or even years to get back where you started.”



“Why waste time and risk your life if you can get on something (like Suboxone or Methadone) that’s safe and you can get back to functioning normally?”

— Elizabeth, in long-term recovery

Cravings and Triggers

Craving is partly a response to powerful cues or triggers to use drugs, such as people, places or things linked to drug use. Seeing the drug itself, or anything that has to do with getting or using drugs can produce cravings in the part of the brain where the memory is implanted. That is why a person recovering from addiction should stay away from triggers under their control. Family members can play an important role in providing healthy alternative activities and encouraging growth of new friendships.

“Justin walked into his boss’s office and saw a painkiller script bottle on the desk as he bent over to work on her computer....he shared that he instantly began sweating profusely and had to run to the bathroom with diarrhea. It hit him immediately in a physical sense.”

— Lea Minalga, mother of Justin who is in recovery

Intense cravings may be related to long-term changes in the brain caused by addiction. Medication-assisted treatment can help prevent these cravings, which can be an extra support as all triggers can’t be avoided.

Withdrawal Symptoms

As explained earlier, when people become dependent on opioids, they feel sick if there are no opioids in the body. This sickness, called withdrawal, can cause many unpleasant and painful symptoms.

- Yawning and other sleep problems
- Sweating more than normal
- Anxiety or nervousness



“I went through withdrawals that were sheer torture and lasted for a week. I coughed and sweated non-stop. Couldn’t eat. Couldn’t sleep. Any sleep I did get was filled with horrible nightmares. My whole body hurt...even the hairs on my head caused enormous pain. I spent most of those days lying curled in a fetal position, crying.”

— [Anonymous](https://www.drugfree.org/thehopeshare),
drugfree.org/thehopeshare

- Muscle aches and pains
- Stomach pain, nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Weakness

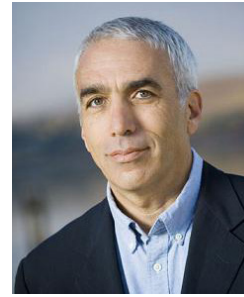
Source: Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Addiction (SAMHSA)

Misunderstandings About Medication-Assisted Treatment

You may encounter some misunderstandings within the recovery community and elsewhere about using a medication as part of treatment. You may hear that medication-assisted treatment doesn't lead to recovery. Some people in treatment programs for addiction, or who are seeking help through a 12-step program, may be told that medication-assisted treatment is simply substituting one addictive drug for another. This is NOT true.

"The co-founders of AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] decided to take no position on medication at all," explains Dr. Knight. "And that is still the official position of all of the twelve-step fellowship programs."

As a parent, you are responsible for helping your child be healthy and safe, no matter what others think or say. You are your child's biggest advocate, so never let embarrassment stand in the way of getting your young adult the help he or she needs and deserves.



"Many addicts need medication to get well... Doctors who really know this stuff told me that anyone who tries to treat an opioid patient that does not use a medication like Suboxone or Methadone, as controversial as they are, is failing their patients because all the research backs up the fact that if somebody is on these medications the likelihood that they'll stay sober is so much higher. Not on its own, it has to be paired with treatment and therapy."

— David Sheff, author of "Clean: Overcoming Addiction and Ending America's Greatest Tragedy"

CONCLUSION: RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE.

Your Child Can Get Better

Addiction is a chronic brain disorder that distorts a person's thinking, feelings and perceptions. It is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences. It is often devastating for the person addicted and everyone who loves him or her.

An addiction to opioids — including heroin and prescription painkillers — impacts the brain more severely than addiction to other substances.

The good news is that there are a variety of effective treatments available for teens and young adults to overcome an opioid addiction. One is medication-assisted treatment. The three key parts of medication-assisted treatment are medication, counseling and support from family and friends.

Recovery takes work. Some people think that after a 30-day treatment program their child will be fine — cleansed of cravings and ready to go back to school and/or work. After your child completes a treatment program, everything is NOT automatically fine again. He or she will need a system of support to prevent relapse to help him or her deal with cravings and the triggers that set off cravings.



“The one thing I’ve realized in this whole thing is that no medication is going to be the key. It’s going to be a combination of the right treatment by medication, the right counseling and the right social group to share experiences with.”

— Larry, father of young adult committed to long-term recovery

Recovery takes commitment every day. But recovery is possible.

With the right treatment, counseling and support, your child can recover and return to a life that is healthy and addiction-free.

Partnership for Drug-Free Kids is committed to helping parents and caregivers find appropriate help for their teen and young adult children struggling with abuse of or addiction to opiates. This eBook is intended to provide parents and caregivers with clear, accurate and accessible information relating to medication-assisted treatment.



For more information, please visit

www.drugfree.org

or call the Parents Toll-Free Helpline:

1-855-DRUGFREE.

Medication, counseling and support:
together they can help your child.



“I held my newborn son in my arms and looked into his eyes and I knew. I was here to give my son the life I never had. I was here to be a father to my son. I left the hospital that day and got enrolled into the Suboxone program to help me get back on my feet and become a person again.”

— Anonymous,
drugfree.org/thehopeshare

GLOSSARY

12 Step

A program designed to assist in the recovery from addiction or compulsive behavior, especially a spiritually-oriented program based on the principles of acknowledging one's personal insufficiency and accepting help from a higher power. Named for the 12 guiding concepts of the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) program for curbing alcohol addiction.

Aftercare

The system of support for a person once intensive treatment is over. Support includes programs and activities to prevent relapse by helping the person in recovery deal with cravings and the triggers that set off cravings.

Addiction

A chronic, relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences. It is considered a brain disease because drugs change the brain; they change its structure and how it works. These brain changes can be long lasting and can lead to many harmful, often self-destructive, behaviors.

Chronic Disease

A medical condition for life. It cannot be cured, but it can be managed. Examples are heart disease, diabetes and opioid addiction.

Counseling

An interactive helping process focusing on the needs, problems and feelings of the patient to enhance or support coping, problem solving and interpersonal relationships.

Craving

A powerful, often uncontrollable desire for drugs or alcohol.

Dependence

Dependence develops when the neurons adapt to repeated drug exposure and only function normally in the presence of the drug.

Detoxification (or Detox)

A process of allowing the body to rid itself of a drug while managing the symptoms of withdrawal; often the first step in a drug treatment program.

Dopamine

A brain chemical, classified as a neurotransmitter, found in regions of the brain that regulate movement, emotion, motivation and pleasure.

Medication-Assisted Treatment

The use of medication to help address issues related to opioid dependence, including withdrawal, cravings and relapse prevention. The medications used with teens or young adults with an opioid dependence are buprenorphine with and without naloxone, methadone and naltrexone.

Neurotransmitter

Chemical compound that acts as a messenger to carry signals or stimuli from one nerve cell to another.

Opioids

Opioids are drugs that affect the brain to reduce the intensity of pain signals. They slow down the actions of the body, such as breathing and heartbeat and cause a person to feel increased pleasure. The word “opioid” comes from opium, a drug made from the poppy plant. Opioids refer both to certain prescription painkillers — like Codeine, OxyContin, Percocet and Vicodin — as well as the street drug heroin.

Recovery

A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life and strive to reach their full potential.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Facts About Buprenorphine

English: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA09-4442/SMA09-4442.pdf>

Spanish: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA10-4442SPANISH/SMA10-4442SPANISH.pdf>

Follow Directions, How to Use Methadone Safely

dpt.samhsa.gov/methadonesafety/downloads/follow_directions_methadone_brochure.pdf

The Facts About Naltrexone

English: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA12-4444/SMA12-4444.pdf>

Spanish: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA10-4444SPANISH/SMA10-4444SPANISH.pdf>

Information about Suboxone

suboxone.com

Guide to Commonly-Abused Drugs

drugfree.org/drug-guide

Directories

The Opioid Treatment Program Directory

Find opioid treatment programs in your state <http://dpt2.samhsa.gov/treatment/directory.aspx>

Suboxone Doctor Locator

Find certified doctors near you who can prescribe a private, in-office treatment for addiction to opioid prescription painkillers or heroin. http://www.suboxone.com/patients/opioid_dependence/find_a_doctor.aspx

PARENTS
TOLL-FREE
HELPLINE



1-855-DRUGFREE
(1-855-378-4373)

Speak to a Parent
Specialist today.

We're here to help you.
Call us Monday to Friday,
10:00 am – 6:00 pm ET

