Concerned about opioid abuse?

Here's What You Should Know

Have you or a loved one been prescribed opioid painkillers and worry about misusing them? It's a common concern. An estimated 2.1 million people in the US are suffering from substance abuse related to these powerful pain relievers. Knowing the facts and seeking help early could be a lifesaver! Health Advocate can help. Here's what you should know.

What are opioids?

Opioids are powerful prescription pain relievers like hydrocodone (e.g., Vicodin) or oxycodone (e.g.,OxyContin or Percocet). They're often prescribed after an injury or surgery.

What's the concern?

- Opioids are addictive and easy to misuse. Anyone can become addicted.
- Taken over time, opioids can produce serious mental and physical effects that can interfere with the ability to function normally. They can also create a constant need to take the drug which can result in overdose or even death.
- Once addicted to opioids, many people have switched to Fentanyl—a synthetically made opioid that's more potent than heroin, and often obtained as an illegal narcotic.
- Fentanyl is responsible for a growing number of overdose deaths.

How can you protect against opioid misuse?

Spotting the beginning signs of abuse early can lead to successful interventions. Look for these warning signs:

- Drowsiness. Nodding off during a conversation, meeting, class or dinner.
- Inability to focus. Poor concentration can result in impaired performance and missed days at work or school.
- Loss of relationships. People misusing painkillers may be increasingly isolated or choose to be with others who have similar addictions.
- Physical changes. Signs include: small pupils, itching or flushed skin, an unkempt appearance, confusion, slurred speech, or frequent flu-like symptoms—nausea, fever and headache can be signs of withdrawal when someone can't get more of the drug.

Turn to Us

Even if only one or two of these signs apply to you or a loved one, remember that taking opioids beyond a doctor's prescription places people at risk for overdosing. Call Health Advocate without delay. We can help identify the right doctors and facilities that treat addiction and can also help find support groups.

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