

Prescription Opioids (Abuse) Health Effects

Hydrocodone, Oxycodone, Codeine

Health Effects

Acute	<p>Pain relief, drowsiness, nausea, constipation, euphoria—in some.</p> <p>When taken by routes other than as prescribed (e.g., snorted, injected), increased risk of depressed respiration, leading to coma, death. CDC reports marked increases in unintentional poisoning deaths since late the 1990s, due mainly to opioid pain reliever overdose (often in combination with alcohol or other drugs).</p>
Long-term	<p>Tolerance, addiction</p>
In combination with alcohol	<p>Dangerous slowing of heart rate and respiration, coma, or death</p>
Withdrawal symptoms	<p>Restlessness, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, cold flashes with goose bumps ("cold turkey"), and leg movements.</p>

Associated Special Vulnerabilities/Populations

Youth	<p>8-10% of high school seniors have used Vicodin nonmedically in the past year; ~5% have abused OxyContin</p>
Pregnancy	<p>Spontaneous abortions; low birth weight</p>
Older Adults	<p>The higher prevalence of pain in this population renders a greater number of prescriptions written for opioid medications. Unintentional misuse or abuse could have more serious health consequences for elderly patients because of comorbid illnesses (and multiple prescriptions), potential for drug interactions, and age-related changes in drug metabolism.</p>

Treatment options

Medications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Methadone, Buprenorphine, & Naltrexone (short and long-acting)
Behavioral Therapies	<p>Behavioral therapies that have proven effective for treating addiction to illicit opioid drugs, such as heroin, may be useful in addressing prescription opioid addiction. (For more information on these treatments, please see NIDA's Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide - Behavioral Therapies.)</p>