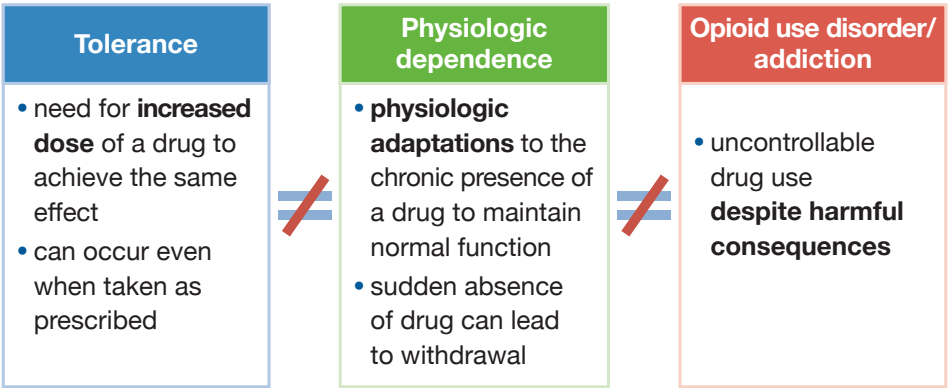


# Discuss harm reduction strategies with all patients

## Opioid dependence is not the same as opioid addiction<sup>1</sup>



A patient who becomes physically dependent on opioids prescribed for chronic pain or for the treatment of OUD, and takes them as prescribed with no impairment of daily life, is not considered to have an addiction.

**Screen for infections**  
(especially HIV, hepatitis C and B, and STIs like syphilis)

**Recommend or provide immunizations**  
(hepatitis, pneumococcus, tetanus)

**Prescribe intranasal naloxone (e.g., Narcan) to prevent overdose**

### Other harm reduction strategies:

- For patients who use opioids alone, recommend [www.nevrusealone.com](http://www.nevrusealone.com) or the 1-800-484-3731 hotline to prevent unintentional overdose.
- For those who inject, **discuss sterile injection practices** to reduce the transmission of bloodborne pathogens like HIV, hepatitis C, and hepatitis B; link with a syringe exchange program or prescribe insulin needles.
- **Recommend fentanyl test strips**, if available.
- Evaluate whether **pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is indicated** for HIV prevention.
- Ask patients about **pregnancy plans** to support their goals.

# Does the patient have opioid use disorder (OUD)?

**OUD is problematic opioid use that leads to significant impairment or distress marked by at least two of the following over the past 12 months:<sup>2</sup>**

- using opioids at higher doses or longer than intended
- unsuccessful attempts to control or reduce use
- significant time spent obtaining, consuming, or recovering from opioids
- cravings for opioids
- failure to fulfill obligations because of opioid use
- persistent social or interpersonal problems caused by opioids
- opioid use displaces social, work, or recreational activities
- using opioids in hazardous situations (e.g., while driving)
- use continues despite physical or psychological problems caused or worsened by opioids
- tolerance: a reduced effect of the drug despite increasing dosages (in patients taking opioids other than as prescribed)
- withdrawal (in patients taking opioids other than as prescribed)

Mild: 2-3 criteria; Moderate: 4-5 criteria; Severe: 6 or more criteria

(1) Szalavitz M, Rigg KK, Wakeman SE. Drug dependence is not addiction-and it matters. *Ann Med.* 2021; 53(1):1989-1992. (2) American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Ed., Text Revision.* Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing; 2022.



Balanced information for better care

**These are general recommendations only; specific clinical decisions should be made by the treating clinician based on an individual patient's clinical condition.**

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