



Q&A about opioid use disorder

? What is opioid use disorder (OUD)?

OUD is the problematic use of opioids, such as oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet), hydrocodone (Vicodin), fentanyl, or heroin, that has serious negative effects on a person’s life. Problems can include an inability to go to work or school, having life center on buying and using opioids, and issues with relationships.

? What causes OUD?

Repeated opioid use can cause chemical changes in the brain that create a craving for these drugs. This risk can be increased in some people by genetic and environmental factors.

? Is treatment available for OUD?

Yes. OUD is a chronic disease like diabetes or high blood pressure, and requires medication treatment. Medication for OUD may be combined with behavioral support.

Medications that can treat OUD:

Buprenorphine or buprenorphine/naloxone (such as Suboxone)

- can be prescribed by licensed clinicians
- does not usually require daily clinic visits
- given under the tongue or as an injection

Methadone

- only available through specialized opioid treatment programs
- usually requires daily visits
- offered with counseling to support recovery

Naltrexone (Vivitrol)

- can be prescribed by any healthcare professional
- given as a monthly injection

Psychosocial support, such as counseling, teaches new ways to cope with daily life.

- Services can be provided by a doctor, psychologist, social worker, or other healthcare professional.
- Peer support and self-help groups can also be helpful.

Abstinence alone (stopping all use of opioids) is not usually successful and can in fact increase risk of overdose. It is important to seek support from friends, family, and professionals.

? Can a person with OUD recover?

Yes. Recovering from opioid use disorder is a life-long process. A person recovering from OUD often has to find a new way to live and make positive relationships.

? Can someone with OUD be cured?

No. Just as diabetes is not “cured” by insulin, people with OUD are not “cured” by medication, but can better manage their condition.

? How can someone get treatment?

A healthcare professional may prescribe medications or refer you to someone who can. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers a 24/7 hotline to find local support: **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** or **findtreatment.gov**

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988



For more information about OUD, visit:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: **cdc.gov/RxAwareness**
- SAMHSA: **samhsa.gov**
- National Institute on Drug Abuse: **nida.nih.gov**



Balanced information for better care

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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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