



# 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**



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

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