

**Important Member Notice:**

**The Opioid Epidemic: What You Should Know**

Opioids are drugs commonly utilized to relieve pain. When taken in large amounts they can also create a feeling of euphoria (or a high). When overutilized persons can be at risk for overdose and death.

Opioids can be prescription or illicit. Common prescription opioids include hydrocodone (such as Vicodin and Norco), oxycodone (such as OxyContin and Percocet), morphine (such as MS Contin and Kadian) and fentanyl (such as Duragesic and Actiq). Illicit drugs are utilized in a nonmedical way and are prohibited by law. Examples of illicit opioids include heroin and illicitly manufactured fentanyl.

The United States is in the midst of an Opioid Epidemic. More than 130 people a day die from opioid-related drug overdoses. In 2020, over 19% of all opioid overdose deaths involved heroin. In Chicago alone, from January-June 2020:

* + 573 opioid-related overdose deaths occurred
	+ Opioid-related overdose deaths were highest among Men, Non-Latinx Blacks and Adults ages 45-54, representing a 55% increase compared to 2019

Since 2013, there has been a significant increase in opioid-related drug overdoses involving illicitly manufactured fentanyl. Often these overdoses involve fentanyl mixed with heroin and cocaine. Since 2013, there has been a significant increase in opioid -related drug overdoses involving fentanyl.

Opioid related drug overdose can occur when prescription and illicit opioids are misused. The risk of opioid overdose occurs when increasingly higher doses of an opioid is utilized or when opioids are mixed with other substances. Prescription opioid overdose occurs when opioids are taken at higher doses or more frequently than prescribed, when medication sharing occurs, and when prescription opioids are mixed with alcohol or other medications that cause sedation.

**What can you do to Prevent Opioid related drug Overdose?**

* Use nonpharmacological or nonopioid therapies when possible
* Understand the risks of Prescription opioids
* Be familiar with the signs of opioid Addiction
* Only take opioid medications as prescribed
* Ensure the appropriate storage and disposal of opioid medications
* Don’t share medications with others
* Avoid taking opioids with alcohol and other sedating medications
* Educate family and friends on the harm and addictive potential of illicit opioid use

CountyCare is committed to helping decrease the number of Opioid related overdoses and deaths. Through increasing public awareness, we hope to ensure the safe and effective use of opioids in our community.

References:

<https://www.cdc.gov/opioids/basics/index.html>

<https://www.hrsa.gov/opioids>

[Opioids | National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) (nih.gov)](https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/opioids)