

# Let's Talk About Opioids

## Activity Book



Supported by Wisconsin Department of Health Services Minority Health Program



A division of Wisconsin Literacy, Inc.

## Prescription Opioids

(Look at student book page 2)



**What do you think of when you see the word “opioid?”**

Many people think of illegal drugs like heroin. Heroin is an opioid, but there are other opioid drugs, including prescription pain medicines.



**Did you know?** Prescription opioids can be as dangerous as heroin.



**Can you list any prescription opioid pain medicines?**

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**Compare your list to the list on Page 2 of the student book.**

If you need a pain medicine, you can choose a non-opioid pain medicine. There are prescription and over-the-counter options.



**What over-the-counter pain medicines can you list?**

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**Can you list any non-opioid prescription pain medicines?**

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**Compare your lists to the second list on Page 2 of the student book.**

Non-opioid pain medicines are not addictive like opioid pain medicines, but they can be dangerous if you take too much.



**Can you think of a non-opioid pain medicine that can hurt you if you take too much?**

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One example is acetaminophen (Tylenol) – if you take too much your liver can stop working. We'll look at more examples on page 4 of the student book.

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## Ways to Take Opioids

(Look at student book page 3)

Look at the pictures at the top of page 3 in the student book.



**Do any of the pictures look more dangerous (or safer) than the others?**



**Did you know?** They can **all** be dangerous. No matter how you take them, if you use opioids long enough, you **will** develop a tolerance and a physical dependence.



**How can you explain the difference between tolerance and physical dependence?**

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**Compare your answer to the definitions on Page 3 of the student book.**

Some people start taking opioids at a party or with friends, thinking they'll be able to take opioids when they want, then stop easily. This idea is dangerous.



**What are some problems an opioid addiction can cause?**

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The most dangerous risk of using opioids is that you can **stop breathing** and **die**.

You can also have **financial, emotional, and family problems** because you cannot stop.

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You can get help with addiction – we will talk about that soon.

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## **Don't Take Opioids with Other Drugs**

**(Look at student book page 4)**

Taking opioids with other drugs and medicines can kill you.



**Did you know?** Last year in Wisconsin, more people died from opioid overdoses than in car crashes.

Taking an opioid with **alcohol** can kill you. Alcohol slows down your breathing. Opioids also slow down your breathing. If you take them together you can stop breathing and die.



**What do you think of when you see the word "alcohol?"**

Many people think of beer, wine and liquor, but...



**Did you know?** Many cough medicines have alcohol in them. If you use opioids and take cough syrup that has alcohol, you can die. Always read the medicine label on cough medicine, so you know if it has alcohol.

Taking an opioid with a **benzodiazepine (benzo)** can kill you. Always check with your doctor before taking an opioid with a benzo.



**Can you list some benzodiazepines?**

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**Compare your list to the list on Page 4 of the student book.**

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Benzos treat anxiety, and they slow down your breathing. Opioids also slow down your breathing. If you take them together you can stop breathing and die.

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Taking an opioid pain medicine with **Tylenol (acetaminophen)** can kill you.



**Why do you think it's dangerous to take some opioid pain medicines with Tylenol?**



**Did you know?** Some opioid pain medicines have acetaminophen in them. If you take too much Tylenol (a brand name for acetaminophen) your liver can stop working and you can die.

Opioids can have dangerous (and deadly) interactions with many drugs and medicines. This includes:

- prescription medicine from a doctor
- over-the-counter medicine
- herbals, plants, and other home remedies



**What if you don't know how an opioid will interact with a specific drug or medicine?**

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Ask a doctor or pharmacist. Remember – it's fast and free to ask a pharmacist any question!

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## Your Increased Risk of Death from Opioids

(Look at student book page 5)



**Did you know?** If you have been in jail or prison, your risk of dying from an opioid overdose is very high. In fact, you are 129 times more likely to die from a drug overdose in the first 2 weeks after you are released from prison.



**Why do you think your risk of dying from opioids is higher after you've been released from prison?**

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**Compare your list to the list on Page 5 of the student book.**



**There are 3 reasons listed on page 5. Think about your personal experiences.**

- **Do any of these 3 reasons stand out to you specifically?**
- **Can you think of other reasons that aren't listed in the student book?**

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We're going to talk more about fentanyl and other synthetic opioids, as well as the impact of trauma on opioid addiction.

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## Synthetic Opioids

(Look at student book page 6)



**Can you explain what a synthetic opioid is?**

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A synthetic opioid is an opioid that is manufactured. It doesn't come naturally from a poppy plant. Two examples are: fentanyl and carfentanil.

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**How much stronger is fentanyl than morphine?**

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**How much stronger is carfentanil than morphine?**

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**Check your answers on Page 6 of the student book.**

Look at the picture on the bottom of Page 6. It shows how deadly synthetic opioids are.



**Think about any experiences you have with synthetic opioids.**

- **Did you know how strong they were?**
- **Why is the information on page 6 important?**

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When you buy any drug on the street, there is a very high chance it is mixed with a synthetic opioid like fentanyl or carfentanil.

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## You Don't Know What's in a Drug You Buy on the Street

(Look at student book page 7)

Look at the pictures at the top of Page 7.



**Did you know?** Fentanyl can be mixed into each of these drugs. If you buy a drug on the street, it probably has fentanyl in it – even if it's a pill that looks like a prescription opioid medicine. Unless you get pills from a pharmacy, you don't know what's in them.

One of the reasons fentanyl is so dangerous is that it's impossible to mix fentanyl evenly with another drug. There is not a dealer out there who is qualified or has the equipment to mix fentanyl evenly with another drug.



**What does this mean?** Read the salt and flour example on page 7.

**Now, picture this in real life:**

- Remember the image from page 6 -- and how small the deadly dose of fentanyl is?
- Imagine you buy a bag of cocaine.
- First, you don't know what's really in the drug you bought – it's probably not pure cocaine.
- Second, if it is mixed with fentanyl, every portion of the cocaine will have a different amount of fentanyl.
  - One person might take a portion that has no fentanyl.
  - The next person might take a portion that has a deadly amount of fentanyl.



**Synthetic opioids are deadly. How can you avoid them?**

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**The information on this page is important!**

We are going to look at fentanyl testing strips soon. When you test a drug for fentanyl, you must test each individual amount you'll take.

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## Trauma Increases Your Risk for Self-medication

(Look at student book page 8)



**Did you know?** Being in prison means you have experienced trauma. You may have past trauma too.

Read through the list of trauma examples on page 8 in the student book.



**Aside from incarceration, have you experienced other trauma from this list? Have you experienced trauma that's not on this list?**



**Can you list some ways trauma can affect you and your life?**

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**Compare your list to the list on page 8 of the student book.**



**Have you experienced any of the effects of trauma from page 8? Have you experienced different effects that are not listed?**



**Did you know?** Trauma experienced as a child has a very strong impact on your life as an adult. Notice that people who have 5 or more trauma experiences as children have a higher risk for self-medicating.

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Because trauma has such a strong impact on opioid addiction, we need to talk about how managing trauma can reduce your risk of an overdose – we'll look at resources soon.

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## Keep Others Safe

(Look at student book page 9)

Keep opioids away from children, pets, and other adults. This is true for street drugs and prescription opioids from a doctor. Both are dangerous.



**Did you know?** Kids have died after taking fentanyl patches out of the garbage because they look like stickers. Keep patches in a safe place, away from kids. When you throw them away, fold them sticky side together and make sure kids can't see them in the garbage.



**If you can't put opioids in a lock-box or locked drawer, where else could you keep them, to make sure kids and other people cannot get them?**

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If you can't put opioids in a locked box or drawer, put them up high, in a place where kids and other adults can't see them.

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Never use opioids when you are with kids.



**If you use opioids in front of kids, they might be able to take the opioids. What other problems could happen if you use opioids or other drugs when you are with kids?**

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When you use opioids, it's harder to make good decisions and you might pass out. You would not be able to take care of your kids if this happens.

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**Did you know?** Using opioids when you are with kids can create trauma for them. Remember, kids with trauma are more likely to self-medicate with opioids when they are adults.

If you have opioids that you are not using, get rid of them right away. You can ask a pharmacist how. You can also look on the website on page 9 in the student book.



**Do you know where you can get rid of unused opioids in your community?**

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### **Signs of an Opioid Overdose**

**(Look at student book page 10)**



**What are some signs of an opioid overdose?**

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**Compare your list to the list on page 10 of the student book.**

The signs listed on page 10 are common ones, but drugs affect every person differently. Remember, one person can overdose more quickly than another person, or with a smaller amount of drugs.



**Did you know?** A rapid heartbeat is a sign of an overdose of other drugs, NOT opioids.

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If you see someone overdose, call 911. Give them naloxone if you have it.

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## Naloxone

(Look at student book page 10)



**Did you know?** Naloxone is a drug that can help stop an overdose and save a life.

An overdose kills people because they stop breathing and become unconscious (unable to respond). If you overdose, another person has to give you naloxone.

If you are with a person who overdoses, you can give naloxone. It can be a shot or nose spray. For the shot, you don't need to find a vein. You inject it in a person's upper thigh or upper leg. You can inject it through clothes.



Read through page 10 of the student book. **List 2 - 3 important reminders about naloxone.**

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If you use opioids:

- always have naloxone with you (on your body).
  - tell your friends and family you have naloxone.
  - don't use alone (naloxone can't help you if you overdose and there's no one to give it to you).
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**Where can you get naloxone?**

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At some pharmacies, you can buy naloxone without a prescription. Get a coupon online at GoodRx.

You can get naloxone for free at a Needle Exchange program or community workshop. You usually have to finish a short training (sometimes as short as a 10-minute video). Call 211 from any phone to find a program or workshop in your area.

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**Did you know?** You should never drive a person who has overdosed to the hospital. The ambulance can get to you much faster than you can get to the hospital. Also, if you were using, driving a car is dangerous for you and other people.



**Why must you call 911 after you give someone naloxone?**

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When a person wakes up after a dose of naloxone, they need to go to the emergency room. The first dose of naloxone will wear off. Many people need multiple doses of naloxone to stop an overdose.

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**Did you know?** The Good Samaritan Law protects you if you try to help someone who is having an overdose.

By law, if you call for help for yourself or other people, authorities **cannot**:

- revoke your parole, probation, or extended supervision.
- punish you, even if you are in possession or have paraphernalia (pipes, spoons, needles, etc.).

**Note:** The Good Samaritan Law will **not** protect you if you “drop and dash” (drop someone off at a facility and leave **without** getting help). You must make contact with somebody there or with the authorities so they can help that person who has overdosed.



**What questions do you have about the Good Samaritan Law?**

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**How can you get reliable answers to these questions? Who could you ask?**

## Prevent an overdose

(Look at student book page 11)

The only way to completely prevent an overdose is to not use drugs. This might be a challenge, so there are resources to support you.

Recovery support can reduce your risk of self-medicating. **Call 211** or **text your zip code to 898211** to find recovery services in your area.

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When you treat anxiety and depression and heal from past trauma, you lower your risk of using opioids to self-medicate.

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**Do you know examples of recovery or mental health support that can help people who are addicted to opioids?**

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**Did you know?** According to research, the best way to treat opioid addiction is to combine therapy (group or individual) with medicine specific for opioid addiction. Medicine can help so your body doesn't need an opioid. Therapy can help to heal trauma and manage anxiety and depression.



**Can you list some medicines that treat opioid addiction?**

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**Compare your list to the list on page 11 of the student book.**

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If you take these medicines, you do need to be careful. Your risk of overdose is even higher if you take an opioid with one of these medicines.

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If there is a chance you might use an opioid, you can lower your risk of dying from an overdose.



**Can you list some ways to lower your risk of an overdose?**

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**Compare your list to the list on page 11 of the student book.**

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Remember, all the naloxone in the world won't save you if you're not with someone who can give it to you. Never use opioids alone.

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**Can you explain what fentanyl testing strips are?**

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**Did you know?** Using fentanyl testing strips takes time and effort, but they can save your life if you buy a drug that is mixed with fentanyl.

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You **must** understand the instructions, because they are different for each drug.

You **must** test each individual amount of drug you will use. (If you buy pills, crush and test each pill.)

Get testing strips at a **Needle Exchange program**, or **call 211** and ask where you can get them in your area.

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**Did you know?** If you call 211 or a Needle Exchange program for help – whether for recovery services, naloxone, or fentanyl testing strips – it’s all confidential.

**You can get help to stop using opioids.**

Here are 4 ways to get help:

- Call 211 from any phone
- Text your zip code to 898211
- Search online: <http://addictionhelpwi.org>
- Go to an online chatroom: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/opioids/find-treatment.htm>



**Do you think any of these 4 resources could be helpful?**

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**Can you list 3 things you learned from this *Let’s Talk About Opioids* lesson?**

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**How will you find help if you or someone you know is addicted to opioids?**

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