

Stigma Reduction



Addiction can happen to anyone

One in 14 Americans reports experiencing a substance use disorder. There is not one single driving factor that leads to addiction. Some people may use drugs to help cope with stress, trauma, or to help with mental health issues. Some may even develop opioid use disorder after misusing opioids they are prescribed by doctors. In any case, using drugs over time makes it easier to become addicted.

Drug use and effects on the brain

When people take drugs, the brain is flooded with chemicals that take over the brain's reward system and cause them to repeat behaviors that feel good but aren't healthy.

The brain adapts to continued drug use by developing a tolerance, which means it takes more of a drug to feel the same result.

Not only does this lessen the brain's ability to resist temptation, but it can also affect the amount of pleasure a person receives from normal, healthy activities like enjoying food or the company of others.



Substance use disorder (SUD)



Opioid use disorder (OUD)

Substance use disorder (SUD) occurs when a person's use of drugs or alcohol results in health issues or problems in their work, school, or home life.¹ Education and awareness around the harm of using substances, along with the support of friends, parents, and caregivers, can help prevent SUD.

Opioid use disorder (OUD) occurs when chronic opioid use causes significant suffering and damage. About 1.6 million people in the United States suffer from OUD.² [Prescription drug monitoring programs](#), [state prescription drug laws](#), and education around safe storage and disposal can help in prevent prescription opioid misuse, OUD, and overdose.

Addiction is a treatable disease

Addiction is a disease, not a character flaw. People suffering from substance use disorders have trouble controlling their drug use even though they know drugs are harmful.

Overcoming a substance use disorder is not as simple as resisting the temptation to take drugs through willpower alone. Recovery may involve medication to help with cravings and withdrawal as well as different forms of therapy. It may even require checking into a rehabilitation facility. Recovery can be challenging, but it is possible.

Recovery options

There are safe and effective ways to recover from substance use disorder (SUD). Finding the right treatment option can be the key to a successful recovery journey.

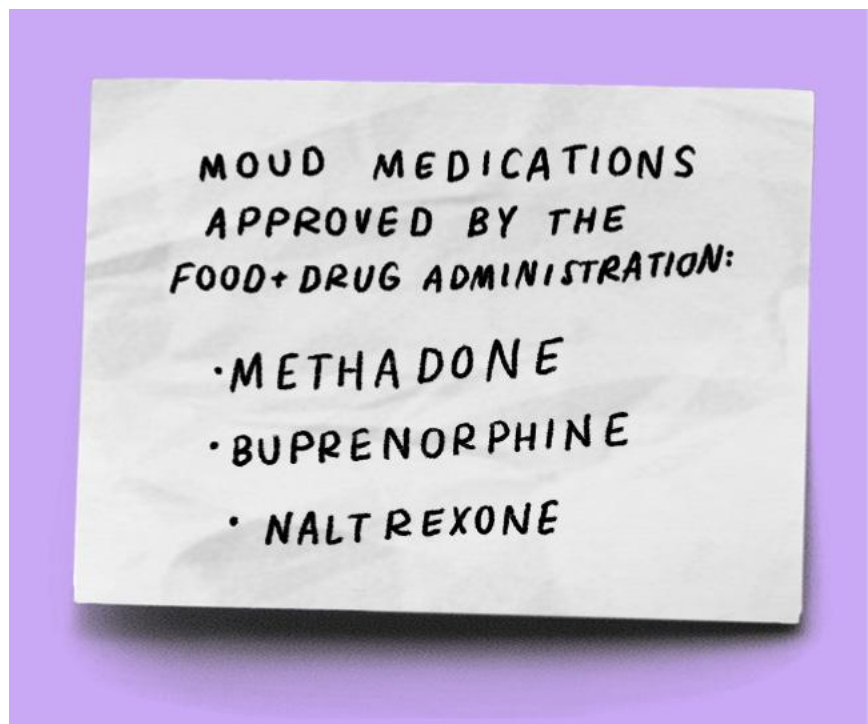
Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD)

Opioid use disorder may require medication as the first course of treatment. **Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD)** can help with cravings and withdrawal symptoms.³ MOUD is effective in helping people overcome addiction, stay in recovery longer, and prevent relapse.⁴

MOUD medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

- Methadone
- Buprenorphine
- Naltrexone

Taking these medications during treatment doesn't mean taking the easy way out; it means finding something that works best for that individual.



Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)

Treatment that combines medicine with counseling or other behavioral therapy is called **medication-assisted treatment (MAT)**. MAT can be an effective way to overcome addiction to opioids.⁵ Behavioral therapy can be equally important as it helps people change their attitudes and behaviors related to drug use, helps prevent relapse, and keeps people in recovery longer.

Additional Treatment Options

- **Twelve-step facilitation therapy** is an individual active engagement strategy designed to encourage people to accept drug addiction as a chronic, progressive disease and prepare them to begin a 12-step mutual support program.⁶
- **Outpatient counseling** can help people understand addiction, their triggers, and their reasons for using drugs. This form of treatment can be done at a doctor’s office or via telehealth appointment.
- **Inpatient rehabilitation** at a full-time facility provides a supportive environment to help people recover without distractions or temptations.

Relapsing is not a sign of failure

Relapse may happen to people who use drugs and can happen even years after not taking the substance. More than anything, relapse may be a sign that more treatment or a different method is needed. A routine review of one’s treatment plan may be necessary to determine if another method could be more effective.

Signs of overdose

Recognizing the signs of opioid overdose can save a life. Here are some things to look for:

- Small, constricted “pinpoint pupils”
- Falling asleep or losing consciousness
- Slow, weak, or no breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Limp body
- Cold and/or clammy skin
- Discolored skin (especially in lips and nails)

What to do if you think someone is overdosing

It may be hard to tell whether a person is high or experiencing an overdose. If you aren’t sure, treat it like an overdose—you could save a life.

- 1 Call 911 Immediately.*
- 2 Administer **naloxone**, if available. **
- 3 Try to keep the person awake and breathing.
- 4 Lay the person on their side to prevent choking.
- 5 Stay with the person until emergency assistance arrives.

**Most states have laws that may protect a person who is overdosing or the person who called for help from legal trouble.*

***Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse the effects of opioid overdose and save lives. It is available in all 50 states and can be purchased from a local pharmacy without a prescription in most states.*

Related Resources

[Reducing Stigma: Understanding Addiction and Supporting Recovery](#)  [PDF – 10 MB]

[CDC’s Real Stories from Real People: Overcoming Addiction](#)

[Reducing Stigma](#)




[Treatment and Recovery for Opioid Use Disorder \(OUD\)](#)

References

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