

OPIATES

Opiates are substances that derive from natural compounds of the opium poppy plant - from a species of poppy called the *Papaver Somniferum*. Over twenty alkaloid compounds have been isolated from this plant, with certain ones (morphine, codeine, and thebaine) occurring naturally in larger amounts.⁶ Morphine and codeine are the most commonly recognized opiates, typically combined with other non-opioid pain relievers such as aspirin or acetaminophen to produce certain types of prescription medications such as Tylenol #3 (codeine/acetaminophen).

OPIOIDS

Opioids are a class of drugs that includes heroin, prescription pain relievers such as oxycodone and hydrocodone (i.e., Oxycontin®, Percocet®), Vicodin®), and dangerous synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, carfentanil, and other analogues. Opioids work in the brain to reduce pain and can also produce feelings of relaxation and euphoria.⁷ A common way to identify various types of pain relieving substances is to describe them as opioids, but the terms “opiate” and “opioid” are often used interchangeably.

PRESCRIPTION PAIN RELIEVERS (PAINKILLERS)

Prescription pain relievers (painkillers) are drugs such as Oxycodone (Oxycontin®, Percocet®) and Hydrocodone (Vicodin®). These drugs typically need a doctor’s prescription, but have been increasingly diverted, misused, and abused. Many types of prescription pain relievers are also known as prescription opioids.

NARCOTICS

The term “narcotic” comes from the Greek word “narco”, which means sleep or stupor, and originally referred to a variety of substances that dulled the senses and relieved pain.⁸ Though some people still refer to all drugs as “narcotics,” today “narcotic” refers to opium, opium derivatives, and their semi-synthetic substitutes.

ANALGESICS

Analgesics are drugs that can help relieve pain without loss of consciousness. These drugs can be further classified into opioid and non-opioid (acetaminophen and NSAID’s) analgesics. This term can also be used interchangeably to describe opioids and may be referred to as “opioid analgesics”.

PRESCRIPTION DIVERSION

Prescription diversion is the sharing or selling of one’s own or another individual’s prescription medication. Prescription diversion is a common method of access for those who misuse prescription pain relievers. Of those aged 12 and older who misused prescription pain relievers in the past year, 53% of those individuals were given by, bought from, or took the substance from a friend or relative.⁹

PRESCRIPTION MISUSE & ABUSE

Prescription misuse is using a prescription in a way other than how it is prescribed by a healthcare professional. This includes taking a dose at the wrong time, accepting prescription medications from a friend, taking drugs for reasons other than what they were prescribed for, or not following medical instructions as labeled or directed. Prescription abuse is using a prescription with the intent of experiencing a “high” associated with the drug. The most recognizable difference between prescription misuse and abuse is the intention that a user has when taking a drug.