



OPIOID SERIES

FACTS ABOUT OPIOIDS

The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation created a series of resources on opioids to help facilitate healthy, productive conversations between law enforcement mentors and at-risk youth in the *Badges for Baseball* program about dealing with the issues surrounding drug use. The “Facts About Opioids” resource includes important terminology and facts needed to have an informed dialogue with kids about the dangers of opioids. Created in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice in an effort to reach children residing in underserved communities and to help bridge the gap between youth and law enforcement, *Badges for Baseball* is the perfect vehicle to address these topics in a safe, structured, and nurturing environment.

1. Opioids are drugs that may be used as medicine for severe pain. They can make people feel very relaxed, sleepy, confused, upset stomach, slow breathing, and “high” and can lead to addiction and death.¹
2. Opioids block pain signals from the brain to the body and release large amounts of dopamine in the body. Misusing opioids can cause less oxygen to get to the brain which causes brain damage or death.¹
3. Dopamine is a chemical in your brain that increases when you do something that makes you feel good. When you do something that makes you feel good, like eating chocolate, you are more likely to want to do it again.²
4. Opioid addiction is a disease. When you misuse opioids, the drug changes the way your brain works and you can lose your ability to stop using opioids.³
5. Young people may use opioids to feel like they ‘fit in’ with their peers or because they feel sad, anxious, or stressed.⁴
6. In 2019, 51,222 people died of opioid overdose in the U.S.⁵
7. In 2019, 567,000 adolescents aged 12-17 misused opioids (prescription pain relievers and/or heroin) in the past year.⁵
8. Every day in 2019, an average of 670 adolescents aged 12-17 misused prescription pain relievers for the first time.⁵
9. 87,000 adolescents had an opioid use disorder in 2019.⁵
10. More than 50% of adolescents who misused prescription opioids got them from family or friends; 37% got them from a healthcare provider.⁵
11. Opioid dependence can happen within five days of using legally prescribed opioids.⁶
12. Non-opioid pain medications work as well as opioids for many types of pain.⁷
13. Filling a prescription for opioids after wisdom teeth removal increases the likelihood of long-term opioid use.⁸

Note: All data in this Opioid Fact sheet was compiled with guidance and assistance from the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) and A Division for Advancing Prevention & Treatment (ADAPT).



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U.S. Department of Justice

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