



## Opioid Crisis Fast Facts

The United States is in the midst of an opioid crisis, the impact surpassing annual car crashes, and the AIDs epidemic in the 1990s. Over two million people in the U.S. have become dependent on or abused prescription pain pills and/or an illicit drug.

At the onset, many users become addicted after a legitimate injury or surgery requires them to take prescription painkillers. Legal painkillers like morphine, oxycodone, or hydrocodone are prescribed by doctors for acute or chronic pain.

However, drug overdoses are on the rise, with 52,000 [overdose deaths](#) in 2015. In the same year, the International Narcotics Control Board reported that Americans represented about 99.7 percent of the world's hydrocodone consumption.

Once people become dependent – needing to take increasingly larger doses of the medication for the same affect – then they are addicted and oftentimes escalate to illicit drugs, such as fentanyl or heroin. People who are dependent on opioids may experience withdrawal symptoms, such as:

- Runny nose
- Sweating
- Anxiety or irritability
- Muscle pain
- Cramping
- Vomiting
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Shakiness
- Chills
- Dilated pupils

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), about 11.5 million Americans aged 12 and older [misused](#) prescription pain medicine in 2016. In the same year, approximately 948,000 of the US population aged 12 and older used heroin. People who become dependent on pain pills may escalate to heroin, as it's cheaper than heroin. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that three out of four new heroin users started out using prescription drugs.

In 2017, President Trump issued an executive order, creating the Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis. The purpose of the Commission is to “study ways to combat and treat the scourge of drug abuse, addiction and the opioid crisis, which is responsible for more than 50,000 deaths in 2015 and has caused families and communities across America to endure significant pain and suffering.”

The Commission's latest draft [report](#) recommends steps such as:

- Establishing and funding a federal incentive to enhance access to Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)
- Providing model legislation for states to allow naloxone dispensing via standing orders
- Providing federal funding and technical support to states to enhance interstate data sharing among state-based prescription drug monitoring programs to better track patient-specific prescription data

See More about the Opioid Crisis:

- National Institute on Drug Abuse – [Opioid Crisis](#)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – [The U.S. Opioid Epidemic](#)
- CADCA – [Prevent Rx Abuse Toolkit](#)