



Who is at Risk of Opioid Overdose?

Anyone who uses opioids is at risk of overdosing, whether they are using them for management of acute or chronic pain, are persons who use heroin or other opioid derivatives, or obtain opioids illicitly.

An opioid overdose may occur when a patient deliberately misuses a prescription opioid or an illicit drug. An overdose also may occur as a result of a medication error; the prescriber may miscalculate the appropriate dose, the pharmacy may dispense the wrong medicine, or the patient may interpret the instructions incorrectly.

Those at increased risk of opioid overdose include persons who are¹

- Receiving rotating opioid medication regimens (and thus are at risk for incomplete cross-tolerance)
- Discharged from emergency medical care following opioid intoxication or poisoning
- At high risk for overdose because of a legitimate medical need for analgesia, coupled with a suspected or confirmed history of substance abuse, or non-medical use of a prescription or illicit opioids
- Completing mandatory opioid detoxification or abstinent for a period of time (and presumably with reduced opioid tolerance and high risk of relapse to opioid use)
- Recently released from incarceration and who have a history of opioid use disorder (and presumably have reduced opioid tolerance and high risk of relapse to opioid use)

Opioid Overdose Statistics²

- Most commonly overdosed opioids:
 - o Methadone
 - o Oxycodone
 - o Hydrocodone
- Overdose rates were highest among people 25-54 years of age
- Men were more likely to die of overdose than women, but the mortality gap is closing
- Each day, more than 1,000 people are treated in emergency departments for not using prescription opioids as directed.

Reference:

- 1) SAMHSA Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit
- 2) CDC Opioid Overdose Data