

Problematic Opioid Use

What is problematic opioid use?

Problematic substance use happens when someone uses drugs or alcohol in a way that has negative effects on their health and life.

Problematic opioid use is using **opioids that are not prescribed to you or using prescribed opioids in a manner not intended or instructed by your doctor or pharmacist**. It also **includes using illegal opioids**.

Young Canadians are being exposed to opioids:

- At **home** through drugs stolen directly from a medicine cabinet
- Through **friends, family and acquaintances** who share leftover or stolen pills
- Through **prescriptions** that are prescribed by a doctor to relieve pain
- Via the **illegal market** by buying opioids or other drugs from the illegal market

When does problematic use become a substance use disorder?

When someone regularly uses drugs or alcohol despite continued negative consequences, they may have a substance use disorder.

This is a **medical condition that requires treatment** by a health care provider. Substance use disorders **can involve both psychological and physical dependence**.

If someone you know exhibits **one or more** of the following **behaviours**, they may have a substance use disorder:

- constant **cravings** for the drug
- **compulsive drug-seeking**
- **continuous use despite** the harms that the drug is causing, such as:
 - **negative effects** to their health
 - **missing school or work**
 - **lower grades** or marks at school
 - **isolation** from friends and family members
 - **extreme changes in behaviours** and mood

But help is available.



How to get help

Getting help can mean **different things for different people**, and it **can take many** forms. For some people it may mean complete abstinence (i.e., avoiding opioids or other drugs completely) or continued treatment using opioid replacement therapies such as methadone or buprenorphine.

There are also many **health and social services available** across Canada including non-medical therapies, such as counselling or support from people with lived and living experience.

More information can be found at Canada.ca/Opioids.

Treatment and recovery are possible

- ✓ **Whether you are looking for help for yourself, a friend or a family member, contact your health care professional**
- ✓ **Need help now? You can reach a Kids Help Phone counsellor 24/7 at 1-800-668-6868**
- ✓ **More resources can be found at Canada.ca/Opioids**

KNOW MORE

DRUGS: GET THE FACTS.
KNOW THE RISKS.

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Get the facts at Canada.ca/Opioids



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