

Opiates

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Do you know of a person using Opiates? However, they declined a referral for support? Here is some helpful information. Please approach conversations with respect and no judgement.



Questions to ask

How are you using it?

Smoking, swallowing, or injecting carry different risks. Injecting increases the chance of infections and blood-borne viruses. Smoking still carries risks to lungs and heart.

How often are you using?

Frequent use increases the risk of dependence, stronger withdrawal symptoms, and higher chances of overdose, especially if tolerance changes. Frequent use can also affect sleep, appetite, and emotional wellbeing.

Are you mixing it with other substances?

Combining with alcohol, benzos, or other depressants increases overdose risk. Using these categories of substances together is known as the 'Toxic Trio' as it will put you at a much greater risk of fatality.

Impact on Health



Breathing problems

Opiates slow the body down, which can reduce breathing and heart rate. This increases the risk of overdose, especially if mixed with alcohol or other depressants.



Dependency & Withdrawal

Opiates are highly addictive. People may experience withdrawal symptoms like aches, nausea, sweating, or anxiety.



Infection Risks

Injecting can cause vein damage, abscesses, and increase the risk of hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV if equipment is shared.



Sleep & Appetite Changes

Impact on sleep patterns and reduce appetite, weight changes, low energy, and poor physical health over time.

Harm Reduction



Use clean equipment - never share needles, syringes, spoons, filters, or water.



Have a sober sitter or someone not using substances



Avoid mixing with alcohol or benzos - this greatly increases the risk of overdose.



Carry naloxone - it can temporarily reverse an overdose whilst you wait for an ambulance



Go low and slow start with a small amount as strength varies each time.

Reducing

Opiates are NOT always safe to stop suddenly, depending on the level of use

Seek support if reducing - tapering with professional help is safest

1-3
Days

Aches, sweating, cravings, anxiety, disturbed sleep.

4-7
Days

Low mood, irritability, strong cravings, poor appetite, tiredness.

1-2
Weeks

Sleep and appetite begin to improve, cravings reduce but may return with stress.

+ 2
Weeks

Physical symptoms ease; emotional health continues to stabilise with support.

