

OPIOIDS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

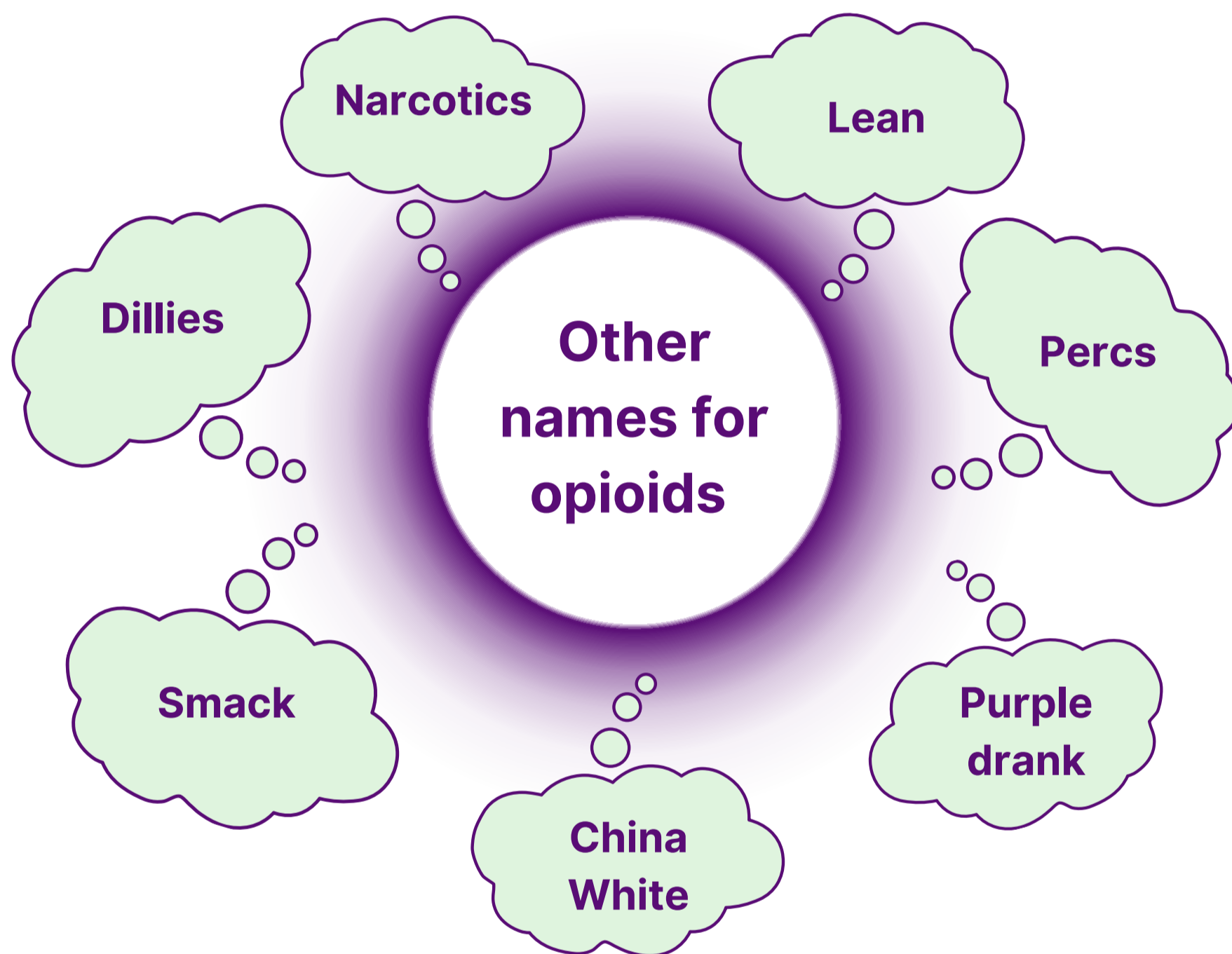
What are they?

Opioids are depressants



Opioids are a family of drugs that provide pain relief. Opioids may be synthetic (made in a lab) or natural (from the opium poppy plant).

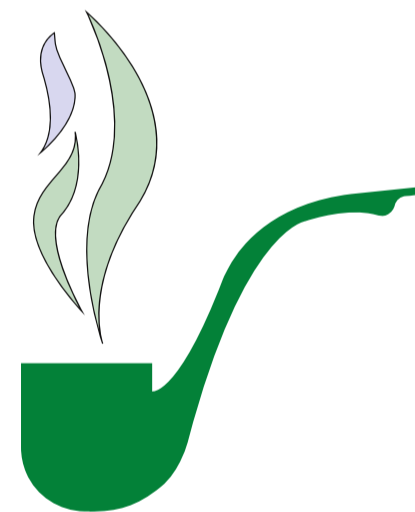
In addition to pain relief, opioids may be used for relaxation and a sense of euphoria.



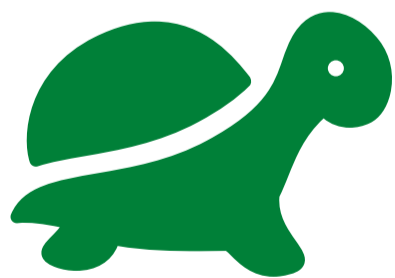
How are they used?

Opioids can be taken orally, dissolved under the tongue, snorted, smoked, or injected.

Common opioids include heroin, fentanyl, morphine, and codeine.



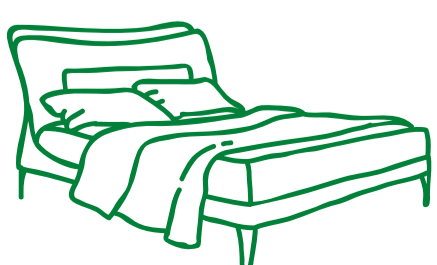
What are the effects?



Opioids slow down body processes, such as breathing and heart rate.



The effect of opioids depend on your tolerance and the dose. Some opioids are stronger than others, or affect people differently.



Opioids can cause drowsiness and confusion. You may feel dizzy and fall down.



Injecting opioids can increase your risk of getting Hepatitis C and other serious infections, like heart infections.



Smoking opioids can permanently damage your lungs and make it hard to breath. Snorting opioids can cause you to lose your sense of smell.



Withdrawal from opioids can cause muscle aches, cold sweats, and irritability.

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When do you seek emergency help?



Opioid overdose or poisoning: Taking more opioids than your body can handle. In high doses, opioids can slow or stop your breathing, causing unconsciousness and death.

Signs: Difficulty walking, talking, or staying awake. Weak breathing, blue or grey lips and nails, and confusion.


This is an emergency! Call 911 right away and give naloxone if it is available.

Did you know?

Many substances can be laced with opioids. This includes drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine ('meth').

It is very hard to tell if a substance has an opioid mixed into it. This is why it is important to always have a naloxone kit on hand.

How to stay safer?



Not using opioids is the best way to stay safer and avoid harms.

If you still decide to use opioids, consider these harm reduction strategies:


- 1 **Don't mix!** Mixing opioids with substances, especially alcohol and benzodiazepines, can greatly increase your risk of an accidental overdose.
- 2 **Plan for safety.** Arrange a ride if you will be using an opioid. Bring condoms if sex is a possibility.
- 3 **Optimize your pain management.** Discussing other pain relief options with your doctor or pharmacist may allow you to reduce your daily dose of opioids. Having a lower dose of opioids reduces your risk of accidentally overdosing.
- 4 **Moderate Use.** Regular use affects your health and relationships. You can develop a dependence or substance use disorder.
- 5 **Don't use alone.** Always have a buddy with you, and check in with friends to make sure they get home safely. Share your location with someone you trust.
- 6 **Timing matters!** Avoid using opioids if you have to go to work or school. Opioids can affect your attention.

Naloxone Kits

Naloxone can save a life!

It's used to **temporarily reverse the effects of opioids**. Giving naloxone when someone doesn't need it won't harm them.

Check out our naloxone instructions: decyde.ca/educational-materials/#substance-use



Call 811 to find where you can receive a kit



For more information visit us at:
www.DECYDE.ca

SWAP provides free fentanyl test strips, which can be used to detect fentanyl in other substances.

To find out more, call or text **709-757-7927**.

These documents are intended to support educators in their delivery of drug education. They are not for direct student use unless deemed developmentally appropriate.

References:

1. Government of Canada. (2023). Opioid Overdose. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids/overdose.html>.
2. Canadian Pharmacists Association. (2020). Opioids. <https://cps.pharmacists.ca/>
3. Nelson L.S., & Olsen D (2019). Opioids. Nelson L.S., & Howland M., & Lewin N.A., & Smith S.W., & Goldfrank L.R., & Hoffman R.S.(Eds.), Goldfrank's Toxicologic Emergencies, 11e. McGraw Hill. <https://accesspharmacy-mhmedical-com.qe2a-proxy.mun.ca/content.aspx?bookid=2569§ionid=210270754>
4. Provincial Opioid Dependence Treatment Centre of Excellence. (n.d.). Overdose and Naloxone. <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Overdose-and-Naloxone-May-13-2022.pdf>