

Indiana's Opioid Epidemic

What Parents Need to Know

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What are opioids?

Opioids are a class of drugs that can be used to reduce pain. They include drugs that are prescribed by doctors, such as Vicodin, Percocet, and OxyContin, as well as illicit opioids such as heroin and fentanyl.

Who is at risk for substance use?

Risk factors that increase the chance of high-risk substance use in youth include:¹

- Family history of substance use
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Mental health issues
- Low academic achievement
- Poor parental monitoring
- Lack of school connectedness
- Parental substance use
- Family rejection

What are signs of opioid use disorder in youth?

Parents and guardians can monitor for the following signs:²

- Changes in their friend group
- Acting despondent, aggressive or angry
- Breaking rules
- Missing classes and skipping school
- Loss of interest in hobbies
- Sleeping more than usual
- Exhibiting physical changes like sudden weight loss, frequent nosebleeds, bloody or watery eyes, or shakes or tremors.

What can parents and guardians do?

- **Keep opioid prescriptions secured and out of children's reach.** Lock boxes are a great way to keep medications secure.
- Carry naloxone. Naloxone, also known by the brand name Narcan, is a drug that reverses the effects of opioids. Naloxone can be given to anyone with symptoms of an opioid overdose. Visit [OptIN.in.gov](https://www.optin.in.gov) to find an naloxone distributor.
- **Dispose of unused medications.** Use [AWAREx.org](https://www.awarex.org) to find a drug take-back location near you, and encourage friends and family to do the same.
- **Ask your provider questions** such as: "What are the side effects of this medication?" or "When can I switch to acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil)?"
- **Parental involvement** can lower the chance teens will use substances. Consider having honest and open conversations about the risks of substance use to help them make healthy decisions.

Fast Facts

- Children ages 0-5 make up most reported poison center exposure cases.³ Specifically, fatal poisonings among children ages 0-5 most commonly involve opioids.⁴
- According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 14% of high school students reported ever misusing prescription opioids.¹

Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Substance Use Among Youth *Department of Health and Human Services*. URL: https://www.cdc.gov/youth-behavior/risk-behaviors/substance_use_among_youth.html
2. Hazelden Betty Ford. (n.d.). Early warning signs of teen substance use. <https://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/warning-signs-teen-substance-use>
3. Gaw, C.E., et al. (2023). Characteristics of Fatal Poisonings Among Infants and Young Children in the United States. *American Academy of Pediatrics*. 151(4). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-059016>
4. Gummin, D.D., et al. (2023). 2022 Annual Report of the National Poison Data System® (NPDS) from America's Poison Centers®: 40th Annual Report. *Clinical Toxicology*, 61(10), 717-939. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15563650.2023.2268981>

