

# Indiana's opioid epidemic: what parents need to know

## What are opioids?

Opioids are a class of drugs that can be used to reduce pain. This includes prescription drugs that are legally prescribed by a doctor, such as Vicodin, Percocet, and OxyContin, as well as illicit opioids such as heroin.

## Who is at risk for addiction?

There are several risk factors that increase the likelihood of developing an addiction that parents should be aware of. These risk factors include starting at a young age, psychological factors (e.g. stress, anxiety, depression), environmental influences (e.g. abuse, trauma, access to opioids), and genetics.

**71.5%** of teenagers using prescription opioids take them for an unintended purpose<sup>(1)</sup>.

## What can parents do?

Be mindful of the number of opioid medications in your home, and keep them secured and out of children's reach. Lock boxes are a great way to keep medications secure.

Dispose of unused medications at a Rx drop-off location. To find a drop-off location near you, visit [in.gov/bitterpill](http://in.gov/bitterpill). Ask friends and family members 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)?"

### The signs of opioid misuse<sup>(2)</sup>:

- Depression and anxiety attacks
- Physical agitation
- Poor decision-making
- Mood swings
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Lowered motivation
- Financial hardship
- Loss of interest in hobbies

Children aged 0-5 are most likely to be unintentionally exposed to opioids. Such exposures occur because opioids are stored within sight or stored inappropriately<sup>(1)</sup>.

## Sources

(1) Allen, J. D., et al. (2017). Prescription Opioid Exposures Among Children and Adolescents in the United States: 2000–2015. *Pediatrics*. 139(4). DOI: 10.1542/peds.2016-3382

(2) Familydoctors.org. (2018). *Opioid Addiction: Signs & Treatment* - [familydoctor.org](http://familydoctor.org). Available at: <https://familydoctor.org/condition/opioid-addiction/?adfree=true>

