



**mind**  
matters

*THE BODY'S RESPONSE TO*

# OPIOIDS

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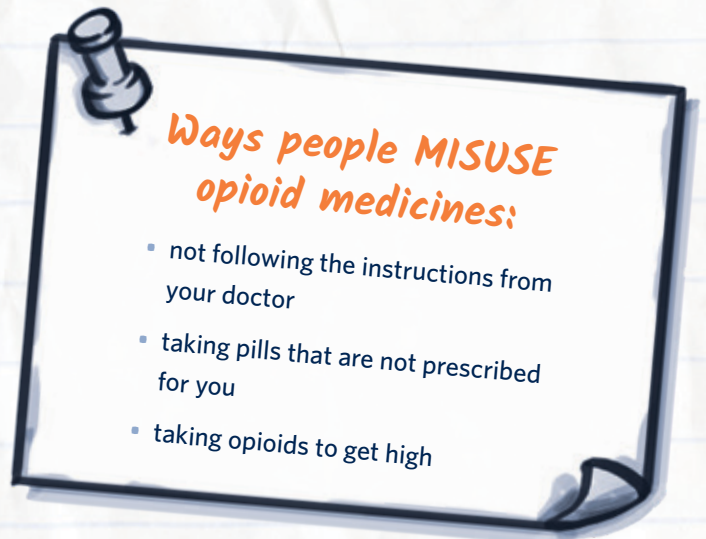
*Hi there! Mind Matters is a series that explores the ways that different drugs affect your brain, body, and life. In this issue we are going to talk about opioids.*



You may have been hearing a lot about opioids lately. It's possible you know them as drugs called "oxy" or "Vikes."

Opioids have been used for hundreds of years. Some opioids come from plants. Others are made in a lab.

Prescription opioids are used as medicine. Illegal opioids are used to get high. Both of these opioids can be dangerous.



## What are opioids?

### MEDICINE

- Doctors prescribe opioids to people who are in very serious pain from things like dental surgery, sports injuries, or cancer.
- If people follow their doctor's instructions and take the right amount of the medicine, opioids can help their pain go away.
- But these same medicines can also be dangerous if misused.

Examples of opioid pills are **OxyContin®**, **Percocet®**, and **Vicodin®**. People sometimes call opioid medicines different names like **Happy Pills**, **Hillbilly Heroin**, **OC**, **Oxy**, **Percs**, or **Vikes**.

### HEROIN

- Heroin is another type of opioid, but it is not used as a medicine. It's an illegal drug that people use to get high.
- It can be a white or brown powder, or a black sticky substance called black tar heroin.
- Sometimes people call heroin names like **big H**, **horse**, **brown sugar**, **hell dust**, and **smack**.

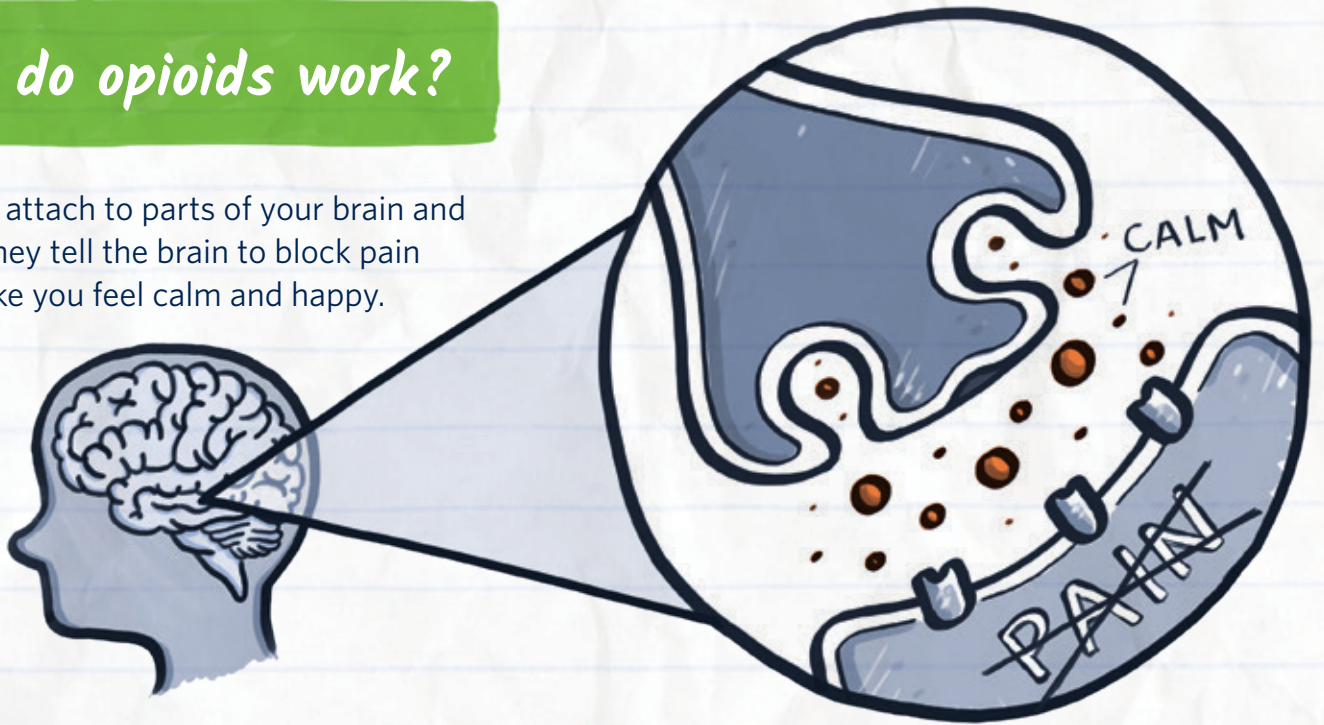
**Both opioid medicine and heroin can cause addiction, overdose, or even death.**





## How do opioids work?

Opioids attach to parts of your brain and body. They tell the brain to block pain and make you feel calm and happy.



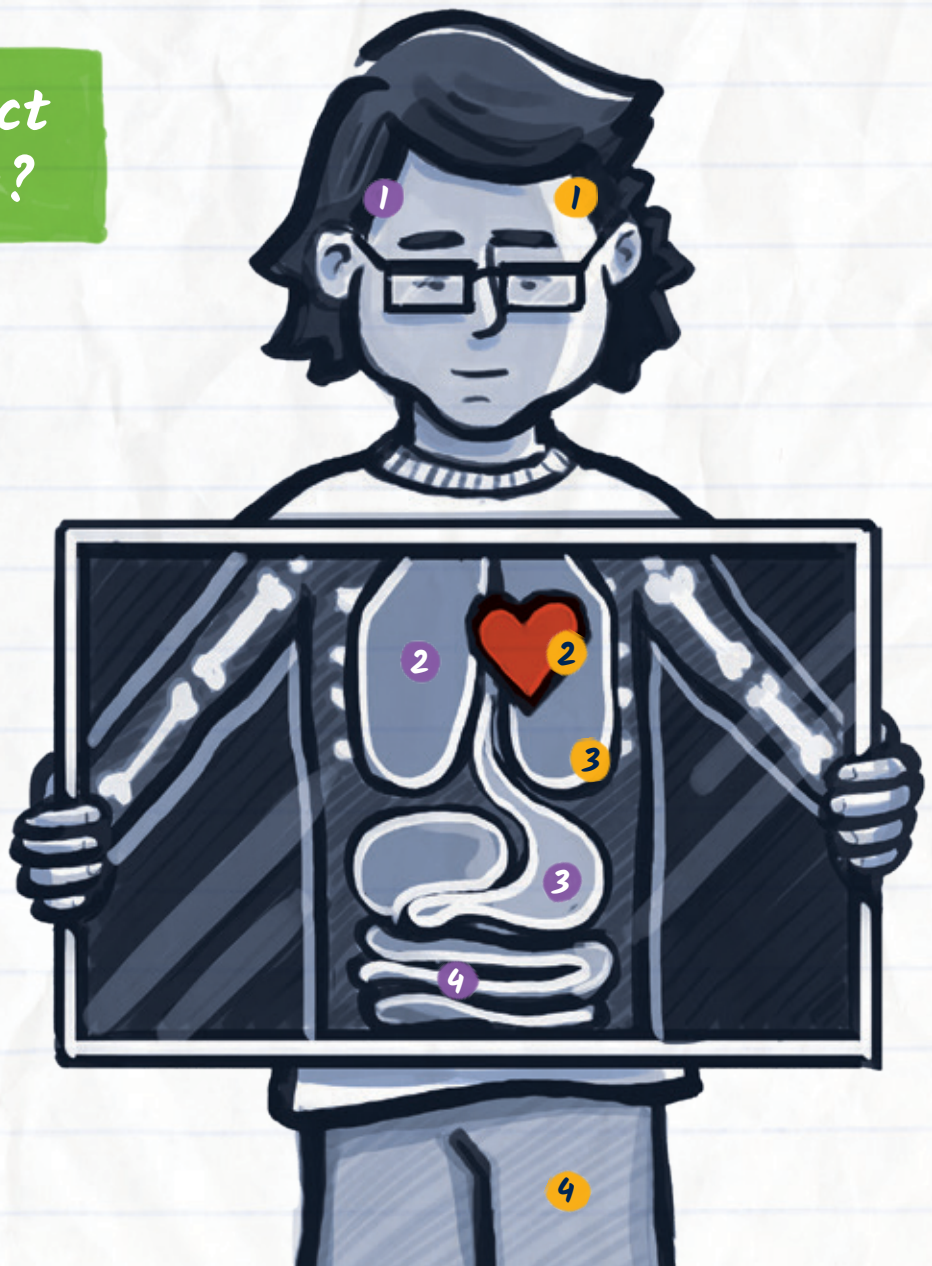
## How do opioids affect your brain and body?

### Short-Term Effects

- 1 Feelings of calm, sleepiness, confusion
- 2 Slowed or stopped breathing (can cause overdose)
- 3 Nausea, vomiting
- 4 Constipation

### Long-Term Effects

- 1 Addiction
- 2 Heart infection
- 3 Lung infection
- 4 Muscle pain





## How do you become addicted to opioids?

Over time, **opioids can change the way the brain works.** If they are stopped all of a sudden, it can be unpleasant or painful. It is like having the flu but much worse. All of this makes it very hard to stop taking the drug. This is called **addiction.**

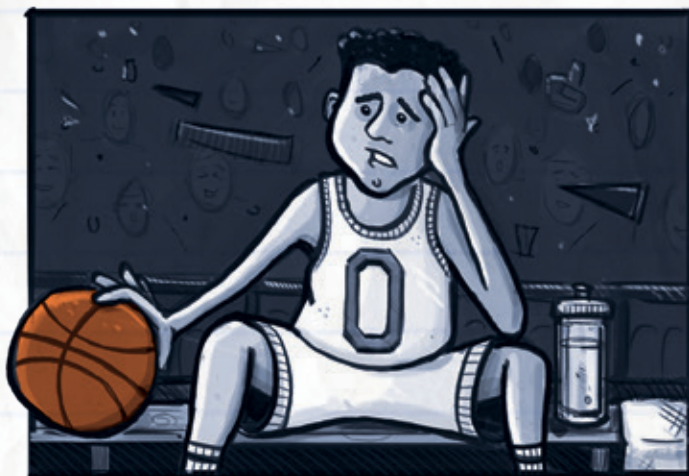
It's important to know that **anyone can become addicted to opioids.** It doesn't matter where you live or how smart you are. There is no way to predict who is likely to become addicted.

More people **die from opioid overdoses** than from other drugs.

## How do opioids affect your life?

If you are addicted to opioids, the drug can take over your life. Getting more opioids and getting high can become all you think about. And it makes it hard for you to enjoy things that used to make you happy.

*Can you imagine if the things you loved no longer made you feel happy?*







*What if someone I  
know needs help?*

**If you think a friend or family member has a problem with drugs, talk to an adult you trust, like a parent, coach, or teacher, right away. Remember, treatment is available and people can get better.**

**For more information, go to [teens.drugabuse.gov](https://teens.drugabuse.gov).**



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