

This category of drug spans over both legal and illegal substances. Opiate drugs are alkaloids that come from the opium poppy plant. This plant has strong pain relieving properties that have been used in many cultures for thousands of years. However, a number of illicit drugs can be made using opium. The most infamous example is probably heroin.

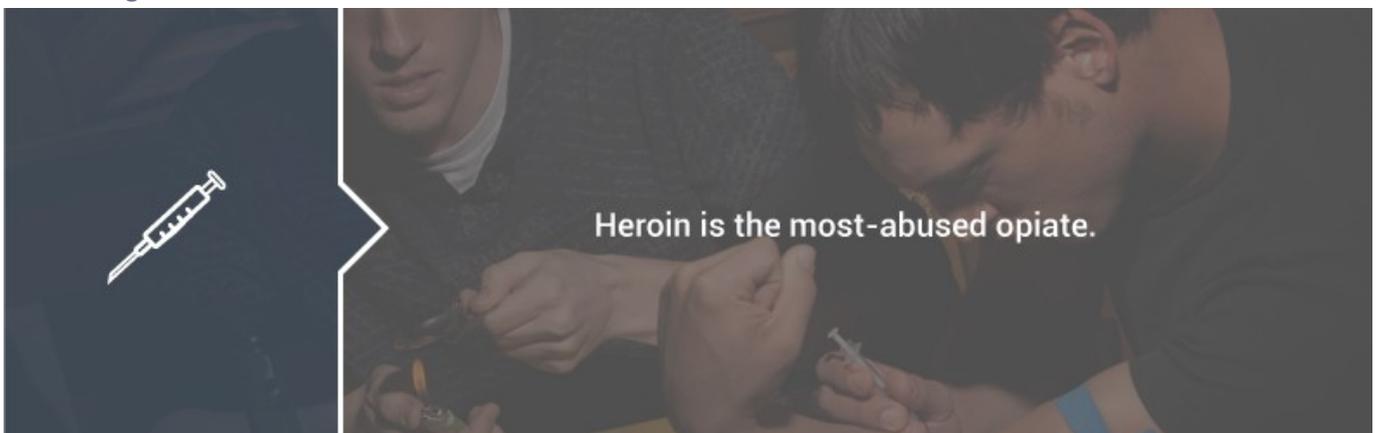
Opioids and opiates often get confused, but they are slightly different. Unlike opiates, opioids are synthetic, or at least partly synthetic. The active ingredients in opioid drugs are created through chemical synthesis instead of through extraction from the poppy plant. Unlike most opiates, opioids are usually narcotics— legal, controlled substances and over the counter medications used for pain relief. Common opioids include:

- Codeine
- Fentanyl
- Hydrocodone
- Hydromorphone
- Methadone
- Morphine
- Oxycodone



Opiate Drugs and the Raging Epidemic

Opiate addiction, particularly the abuse of prescription narcotics, is one of the biggest drug epidemics in the U.S. today. Like any other drug, opiates change the way the brain responds to stimuli, and in this case, they alter perceptions of pain. In addition, opiates influence the reward and pleasure centers in the brain to outweigh the sensations triggered by pain receptors, which brings about a feeling of relief and even euphoria. So, what makes this a bad thing?



The Central Nervous System

Opiate drugs directly affect the central nervous system— the brain, the cardiovascular system and the respiratory system. When the receptors in the central nervous system receive ingested opiates, they send signals to the rest of the body. This results in lowered heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, and even body temperature.

Unfortunately, frequent abuse of opiates can drastically alter a user’s brain chemistry, increasing the chances of developing physical and/or psychological dependence. Simply put, this means that the body won’t feel “normal” anymore without a constant opiate intake. Otherwise, dangerous withdrawal symptoms could occur between doses or when the user

abruptly stops taking the drug.



Opiate Withdrawal

The most common symptoms of opioid withdrawal include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and anxiety. While these and other symptoms can be severe, they usually aren't life-threatening.

However, the severity of opiate withdrawal symptoms depends on a number of factors relating to the user's opiate dependency. Such factors can include:

- the kind of opiate the user is taking
- the amount of the drug that the user regularly takes
- the amount of time the user has been abusing the drug
- the way in which the user injects the drug (i.e. pill, injection, etc.)
- any potential co-occurring mental health issue or other medical condition the user might have
- the user's family history of opiate addiction
- any previous trauma the user may have experienced



The Long-Term Effects of Opiate Addiction

While the withdrawal symptoms certainly aren't pleasant, opiate abusers should be much

more concerned about the symptoms that come with continued opiate abuse. Severe and potentially life-threatening long-term symptoms include:

seizures

liver damage

brain damage

heart problems

respiratory problems

increased risk of fatal overdose

infection due to a weakened immune system

birth defects for the children of pregnant users

Overcoming Opiate Addiction

It's possible to overcome opiate addiction and achieve long-lasting sobriety by undergoing **medical detox**. With the help of trained professionals and an experienced medical staff, like the ones here at Wellness Retreat Recovery Center, any opiate addict can find their footing on the road to recovery.