

## Falling Down the Rabbit Hole: Prescription Drug Addiction

In the story Alice in Wonderland, we remember when Alice chased after the White Rabbit. He scurried into the rabbit hole. Before Alice knew it, she fell right in behind him in the rabbit hole.



Her chase started off as an innocent chase but then turned into something dark and sinister. She lost control as she began to fall deeper into the dark tunnel. That's how millions of people describe addiction. Prescription drug addiction appears to start off as something innocent to manage chronic pain then can easily spiral out of control.

There's something about American culture where we search for quick fixes and that magic pill. Something sets us apart from other cultures: only 5% of the world's population is addicted to opiates. Yet, per the National Institutes of Health (NIH), 80% of those addicted to opiates are in the United States. Some of the suspected reasons for opiate addiction rates in the United States

are Americans' search for quick fix solutions and the good profit margins pharmaceutical companies achieve by marketing opiates for pain management.

This article covers a lot of important information to

help you become a safe and informed consumer and is a two-part series. Part One covers (1) what are opioids, (2) how they work, and (3) talking with your physician about prescription drug use.

### What are opioids?

Opioids are drugs classified in two categories. There are prescription drugs for pain management and street or illicit drugs. Opioids, also called opiates, originate from poppy plants. Street drugs such as heroin are highly addictive; yet Americans are becoming more aware of the highly addictive nature of prescription drugs as well. Morphine, Vicodin (hydrocodone), fentanyl, hydromorphone, Demerol (meperidine), methadone, and Oxycontin (oxycodone) are

some common prescribed opioids.

### How do opioids work?

Opioids are used to manage moderate to severe pain. Opioids attach to receptors in the brain and send signals to the brain and nervous system to block pain signals and create a calm effect. Prescription drugs should be used only as directed by your physician and taken only as prescribed.

### You and your physician

1. If there's something you don't understand about your prescription, ask!
2. Be prepared with questions; if necessary, write them down.
3. Honesty is the best policy. Don't hold back information out of shame or guilt. Inform your doctor of all medications you're taking including herbal supplements and over the counter medications.
4. All drugs have side effects. For example, you may take an Oxycodone for pain relief as prescribed by your doctor. You notice the pain in your back subsides, but you also notice that you feel a bit nauseated after taking it. That is a side effect.



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## About Your EAP

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit set up by your employer to assist you in dealing with personal concerns that may affect your work or home life. Use of the EAP is confidential and free to you and your immediate family members.

Visit our website for more information:

<https://www.paseap.com>

“The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are.”

~Anonymous





## Minute Motivators

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us. - *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it. - *Henry Ford*

It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves, and it is not possible to find it elsewhere. - *Agnes Repplier*

When the past calls, let it go to voicemail. Believe me, it has nothing new to say. - *Unknown*

The greatest mistake you can make in life is to continually be afraid you will make one. - *Elbert Hubbard*

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When you build a tolerance to the Oxycodone, that is also side effect. Remember, your body experiences physical changes while you take any medication. If a physician tells you something has no side effects, find a second opinion!

5. If you notice any adverse reactions in your physical or mental status after taking the medication, inform your doctor.
6. Find a doctor you feel comfortable asking questions of. If you feel rushed by the doctor, request additional time to speak with the doctor, request time with his medical assistant or nurse practitioner regarding any medical questions.
7. Discuss alternatives for pain management.

Arming yourself with the information above helps you in being an empowered consumer. There is a slippery slope for consumers with medical needs and their use of prescription pain management. Your health comes first. Stay tuned for Part II, which will address alternative medicine, how to know if you're becoming addicted, heroin addiction, and ways to get help for opioid addiction.

## How PAS Can Help

Opioid addiction is a real and often fatal disease, but navigating the world of medical care can be intimidating, particularly in the arena of pain management and treatment for addiction.

If you are concerned for a loved one, friend or family member who appears to be struggling with prescription drug use, a PAS consultant can help you determine the best course of action to help your loved one toward recovery.

If you have questions or concerns about your own prescription drug use – whether you are taking medications as prescribed or not – PAS consultants are also available to listen to your questions, and offer guidance, perspective and resources. Call (800) 356-0845 now for free and confidential services.



## Featured Service: Life Coaching



Life takes many twists and turns. Everyone experiences times when they want or need to change something in their life. But we also may experience a lack of confidence and clarity about how to pursue our options. PAS Life Coaches can help. Life coaches provide personalized guidance to help you:

- Identify and achieve goals
- Make changes that improve your overall well-being
- Consider options when making a significant decision or life transition
- Focus on your core values, priorities and passions.

A Service of Your EAP (800) 356-0845