



MARICOPA COUNTY
ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



Keeping Families Safe: Opioid Epidemic

In the late 1990s, the increase in prescriptions of opioid medication in the U.S. led to widespread misuse of both prescription and non-prescription opioids. Since then, the rate of overdose deaths involving prescription opioids has increase 5-fold.¹ The best way to help combat this epidemic is through awareness and education. Help keep your family safe by learning and talking about the dangers and warning signs of opioid misuse.



Recent MCAO Opioid Prevention Articles

Help Prevent Opioid Abuse at Home

Opioid overdoses occur every month, in every age group and in every county across Arizona. It's important to talk to our families about the risks and dangers of opioids.

[Read more...](#)

International Overdose Awareness Day

In recognition of International Overdose Awareness Day, MCAO wants to make sure residents of Maricopa County are aware of the warning signs of drug abuse and symptoms of an overdose.

[Read more...](#)

Help Prevent Substance Abuse: Dispose of Unused Prescription Medication

To help spread awareness of prescription drug abuse, the Maricopa County Attorney's Office wants parents and family members to learn how to get rid of unused medicine and encourage others to do the same.

[Read more...](#)

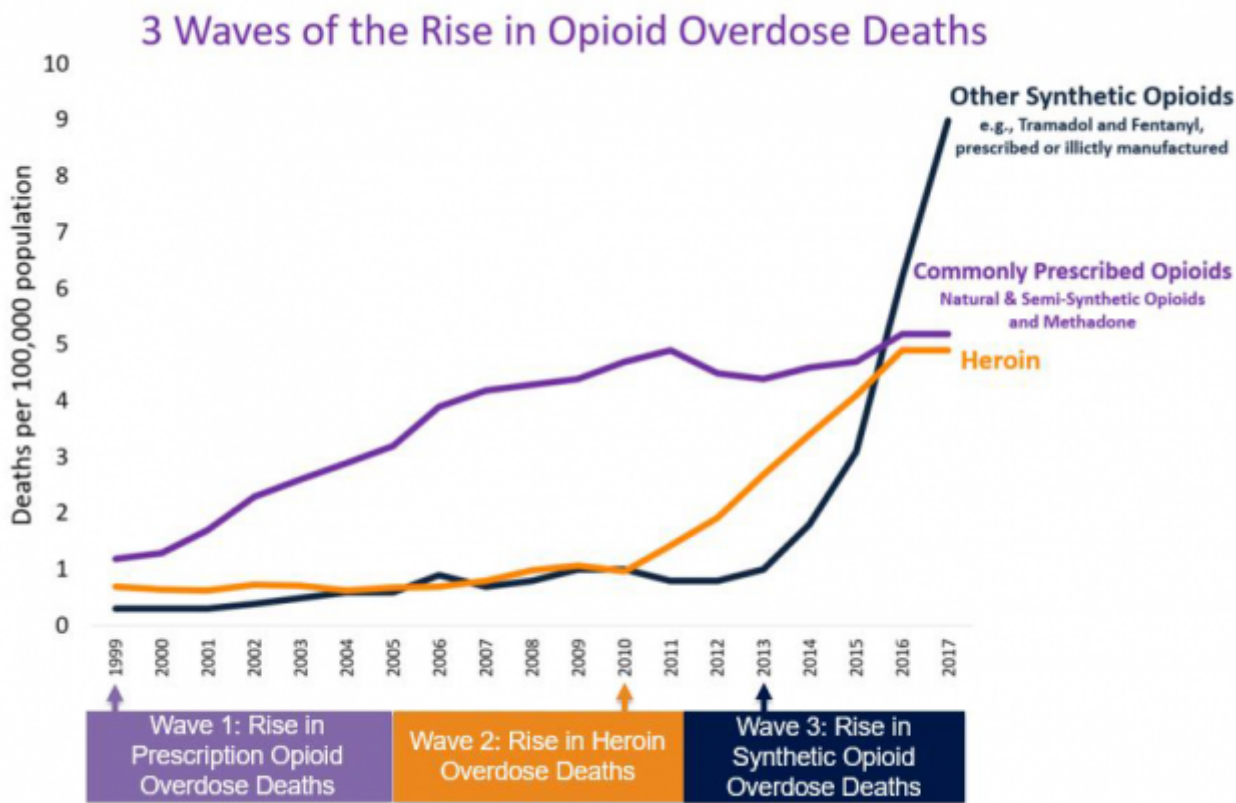
What are opioids?

- An opioid is any substance, natural or synthetic, that attaches to proteins called opioid receptors which reside on nerve cells in the brain, spinal cord, gut, and other parts of the body. When this happens, opioids

block pain signals sent from the body through the spinal cord to the brain.

- Opioids also affect a person's reward system which can make them feel euphoric or high, making them highly addictive.
- Long-term use of opioids can increase dependency and risk of respiratory depression, the slowing or stopping of breathing.
- There are a large variety of opioids including:
 - Codeine.
 - Percocet.
 - Hydrocodone.
 - Oxycodone.
 - Oxymorphone.
 - Morphine.
 - Heroin, an illegal and highly addictive form of opioid with no medical use.
 - Fentanyl, an illegal, synthetic opioid 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine.
 - For a full list of prescription opioids visit, [HopkinsMedicine.org/opioids/what-are-opioids.html](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/opioids/what-are-opioids.html)

National Statistics



SOURCE: National Vital Statistics System Mortality File.

Opioids

- 130 Americans die everyday from an opioid overdose, accounting for two thirds of all overdoses. ²
- 10.3 million people misused prescription opioids in 2018. ³
- Only one naloxone prescription is written for every 69 high dose opioid prescriptions. ⁴
- 59.2 people out of 100 were prescribed opioids in Maricopa County in 2017. ⁵

Overdoses

- From 1999 to 2017 more than 770,000 Americans have died from drug overdose. ⁶
- Children of addicts are 8 times more likely to develop an addiction themselves. ⁷
- In 2018, there were 68,000 overdoses in the U.S, a decrease from 72,000 in 2017. ⁸
- 808,000 people used heroin in 2018 ⁹; about 80% of people who use heroin first misuse prescription opioids. ¹⁰
- Addiction is a disease with adolescent origins: 90% of people who have an addiction started to smoke cigarettes and use drugs before they were 18 years old. ¹¹

One Pill Can Kill

Fentanyl is present and impacting communities across Arizona. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid prescribed to reduce extreme pain and is 100 times stronger than morphine. Just a small amount, as small as 2 milligrams, can be lethal. Young people are overdosing and dying from counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl that they bought on their phones through social media sites. Learn how to [keep your child safe online](#) and talk to them about the dangers of fentanyl.

Warning Signs

- Taking more opioids than prescribed.
- Taking high daily doses of prescription opioids.
- Uncontrollable cravings and weight fluctuations.
- Drowsiness and changes in sleep habits and hygiene.
- Isolation from family or friends.
- Financial difficulties.

Prevention Tips

- Talk to your doctor.
 - Discuss other ways to manage pain that do not involve opioids.
 - Ask them to let you know if you are ever prescribed medication with opioids.
 - If you're prescribed an opioid, use the lowest possible dose in the smallest quantity.
- Keep prescription opioids in a secure place and out of reach of others, especially children.
- Keep track of how many pills you have and make note of any missing medication.
- Talk to your family about the dangers of misusing prescription medication.
- Teach your family to only take medicines given to them by you or a trusted adult. Remind them to never take anyone else's medicine.
- Safely dispose of unused medication by taking it to an RX drop-off location. Find a list of locations here: azdhs.gov/gis/rx-drop-off-locations/index.php

Resources

- [Download our informational Opioid Epidemic card to share with others.](#)
- [CDC Help and Resources - CDC.gov/drugoverdose/prevention/help.html](http://CDC.gov/drugoverdose/prevention/help.html)
- [National Helpline - SAMHSA.gov/find-help/national-helpline](http://SAMHSA.gov/find-help/national-helpline)

Sources

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