



OPIOID MISUSE:

**KEEPING
NEBRASKA
ATHLETES SAFE**

**SERGEANT
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**I have no conflict of interest to disclose
regarding this presentation.**



On average, 130 Americans die
everyday from an opioid overdose.

From 1999 to 2017, more than 700,000 people
have died of a drug overdose.

2017: 70,200 people died of a drug overdose – 68% of those overdoses involved an opioid.

Drug overdoses are now the leading cause of injury death in the United States, surpassing the number of deaths due to homicides and car accidents.





What are opioids?

Opioids are a class of drugs that are used to reduce or dull pain.

Opioids can be classified into three forms:

Natural

Semi-Synthetic

Synthetic

Natural Opioids

Natural opioids are derived from a natural source...the poppy plant.

Opium, Morphine and Codeine are Natural Opioids



Semi-Synthetic Opioids

Semi-synthetics are created in a lab from natural opiates, but additional chemicals are added.

hydrocodone (Vicodin) and oxycodone (OxyContin) and heroin are semi-synthetic opioids



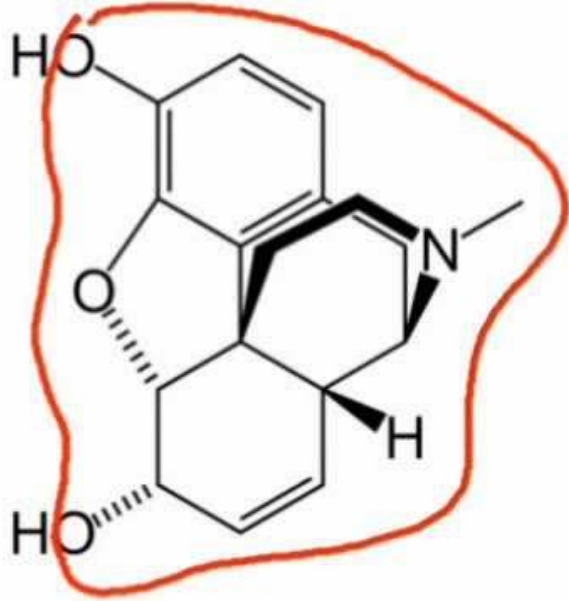
Synthetic Opioids

Synthetic Opioids are a completely manmade substance created in a lab.

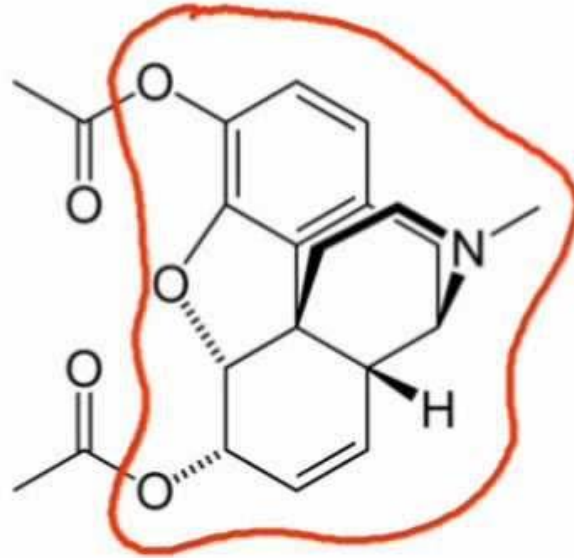
fentanyl, tramadol, methadone are examples of purely synthetic opioids



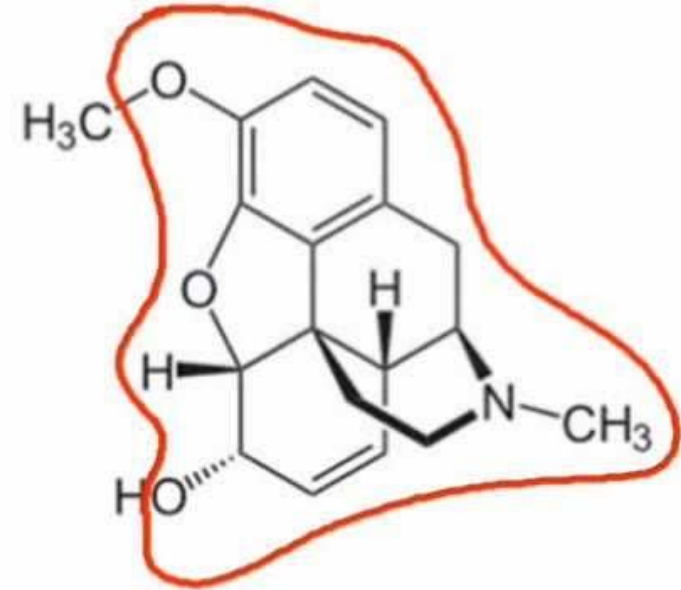
Morphine



Heroin



Codeine



Same!!

Opioids are also one of the most commonly abused substances by both adults and teens in the United States.

In 2017, an estimated 276,000 adolescents were non-medical users of pain relievers.

While sports can benefit an athlete in many ways, there is also a risk of injury.

Each year, an estimated 2 million high school athletic injuries occur each year.



A report from the *American Journal of Public Health*, found that teenage athletes are 50 percent more at-risk of misusing prescription drugs.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention similarly found that heroin usage has doubled for those 18 to 25 years old over the last ten years.

Athletes are at a greater risk of

(1) being prescribed opioids,

(2) misusing opioids (i.e. to “get high”),

(3) being approached to divert (i.e., give away or sell)

Youth who participate in the high-injury sports such as football and wrestling are at an even greater risk to misuse prescription pain medications.



Prescription opioids can help
relieve moderate to severe pain

BUT

pressure to perform can cause
athletes to make risky decisions
that can lead to misuse and
addiction.

Anyone who takes opioids is at risk of developing addiction.

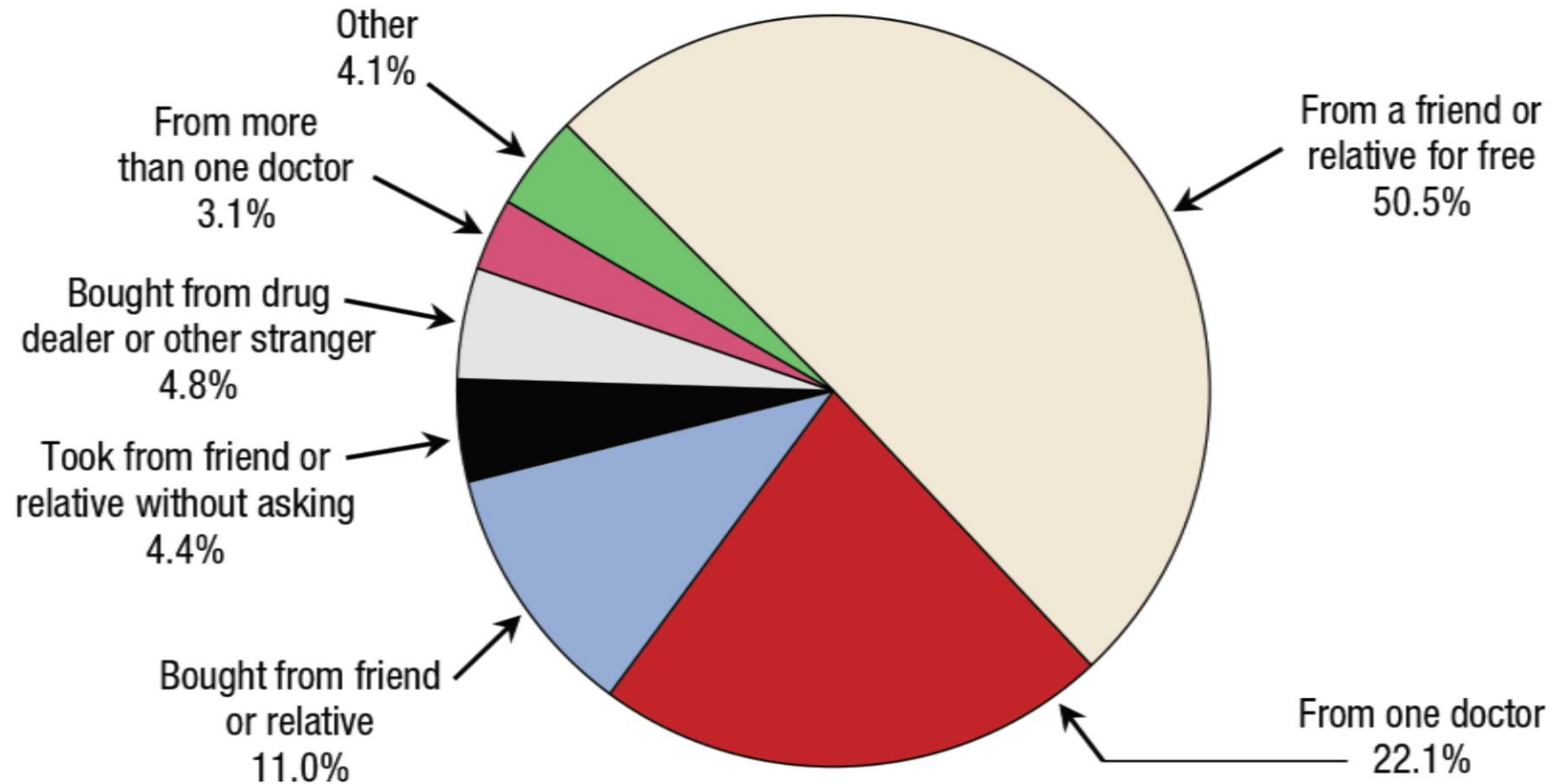
Addiction can happen in as little as a few days.

Athletes who become addicted and cannot get more pills, may....

- approach friends
- steal from a parent's medicine cabinet or
- get pain meds from a relative.



Where do addicts get their pain medication?



If an addict is unable to find pills, they may turn to buying opioids on the street.



On the street, prescription opioids go for \$1/mg.

On the internet/dark web, prescription opioids are even less and have potential to be counterfeit from foreign sources.

Because of the increased tolerance level, addicts may use 300-400 mg or \$300.00 per day.





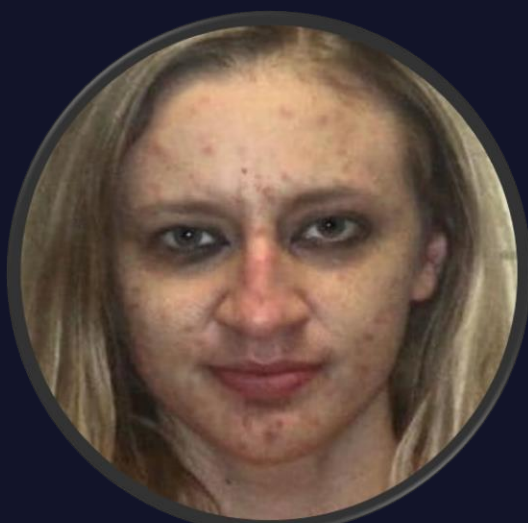
A cheaper
alternative to
opioids and
easier to
obtain is
heroin.

80% of heroin
users report
starting with
prescription
opioids.





How do we prevent opioid addiction in young athletes?



WHEN SPORTS INJURIES DO OCCUR

Be honest with the athlete about the limitations and discomfort that injuries pose.

Pain exists for a reason. Ignoring it or masking it with drugs is not in the athlete's best interest.

WHEN SPORTS INJURIES DO OCCUR

Return-to-play decisions should be made by professionals involved like the physicians and athletic trainers....not the athlete, coach or athlete's parents.

WHEN SPORTS INJURIES DO OCCUR

Document the treatment and return-to-play plan and share it with all parties involved in the athlete's care and sports participation.

WHEN SPORTS INJURIES DO OCCUR

An injured athlete needs time to heal. Missing a game or two is better than missing an entire season or more.

CONSIDER THE INJURED ATHLETE'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Being sidelined and losing a structured activity may lead to depression, loss of connection to friends, and loss of identity as an athlete.

WHAT TO DO IF AN INJURY OCCURS AND PAIN MANAGEMENT IS NEEDED

Opioids for pain should be considered only by physicians – and only when other approaches have not provided relief.

Consider ice, heat, rest, and over the counter medicines.

WHAT TO DO IF AN INJURY OCCURS AND PAIN MANAGEMENT IS NEEDED

Students and their families should talk openly with their health care providers about the medications, their proper use, possible risks and side effects.

WHAT TO DO IF AN INJURY OCCURS AND PAIN MANAGEMENT IS NEEDED

Medication should be left at home or dispensed by a school nurse (as required by law and policy).

Medications should not be shared with anyone, especially other students.

Opioids should be used only as prescribed, with the minimal amount taken for the shortest period of time needed for effective relief.

Unused medication should never be shared; it should be stored securely and disposed of properly.



PHYSICAL SIGNS THAT SOMEONE MAY BE USING OR ABUSING OPIOIDS

- Slurred speech
- Itching or flushed skin
- Constipation
- No feeling of pain
- Euphoria
- Shallow or slow breathing
- Small pupils
- Nausea or vomiting

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS THAT SOMEONE IS USING OR ABUSING OPIOIDS

- Neglecting other activities
 - Taking serious risks in order to obtain the drug
- New relationship issues or acting out against close friends/family

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS THAT SOMEONE IS USING OR ABUSING OPIOIDS

- Going out of one's way to hide the amount of substance used
 - Experiencing unexplained injuries or accidents
 - Seriously changing appearance or neglecting hygiene

MOST COMMONLY ABUSED PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

Hydrocodone (Vicodin, Lortab, Lorcet)

Oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet)

Oxymorphone (Opana)

Fentanyl

Codeine

Morphine

OTHER PRESCRIPTION DRUGS BEING ABUSED CNS DEPRESSANTS

Benzodiazepines: (Valium, Klonopin, Xanax)

Non-benzodiazepine sleep meds (Ambien, Lunesta)

Barbituates (Nembutal, Luminal)

CNS depressants slow brain activity, producing a calm, drowsy, and euphoric feeling that makes them popular drugs to abuse.

OTHER PRESCRIPTION DRUGS BEING ABUSED STIMULANTS

Stimulants (Adderall, Ritalin)

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Increasing alertness, attention, and energy levels.

Many students in high school and college abuse stimulants
to improve “concentration.”

Other abuse of stimulants is related to weight loss.

ATHLETIC DIRECTORS CAN HELP

Educate, Educate, Educate

- Talk to your schools about implementing “Opioid Awareness Training” for athletes and parents at the beginning of the school season, similar to “Concussion Awareness Training.”
 - Educate your coaches on the dangers of opioids.

ATHLETIC DIRECTORS CAN HELP

Stop Overdoses

- Opioid overdoses can be reversed when the lifesaving drug naloxone is promptly administered.
- Increase access to, and training in, administering naloxone among athletic trainers, who are often caring for the athletes.

Contacting the DEA or your local police about suspicious activity.



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