



## WHAT IS OXYCONTIN?

OxyContin is a brand name for a highly potent opioid known as oxycodone. The drug can be legally prescribed for intense pain, such as when a patient has undergone surgery or suffers from a chronic disease. However, this drug is highly addictive and can cause nasty side effects. Anyone who takes this prescription drug is in danger of becoming addicted, and one in four patients taking OxyContin for long-term opioid therapy develops an addiction. Simply because doctors prescribe a medication does not mean it is entirely safe for constant use.



## BRAIN CHANGES

OxyContin is a depressant, which means it slows vital body functions such as breathing, heart rate, and digestion. When it travels through the bloodstream, it attaches to specialized

proteins on the surface of opiate-sensitive brain cells. This is how it tricks the brain into feeling short bursts of pleasure that only result in the desire for more of the drug. However, the more a user ingests OxyContin, the less potent the positive effects become, and the worse the side effects get. OxyContin abuse rewires the brain to become dependent on the drug and users who go without suffer terrible side effects.

## SHORT-TERM EFFECTS



Since taking OxyContin slows down the body's vital functions, it can cause side effects that make the user feel sluggish and disoriented. Other short-term effects include:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dry Mouth
- Itching
- Confusion
- Constipation

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### National Institute on Drug Abuse:

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/prescription-opioids>

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/prescribed.html>

### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

<https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/about-the-epidemic/index.html>

**in the know**

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# OXYCONTIN

ADDICTION IS A  
TABLET AWAY





## LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Long-term effects of OxyContin are far more devastating and cause permanent damage to the body. These include:

- Decreased Heart Rate and Blood Pressure
- Hyperalgesia (sensitivity to pain)
- Difficulty urinating
- Depression
- Death



## ADDICTION

OxyContin abuse (meaning taking more than is prescribed) can lead to dependence on the drug. It can make a person feel that the drug is required to function in daily life, and a person may use the drug at the expense of other priorities or activities. When prescribed this drug it is of utmost importance to only ingest it in accordance with a doctor's orders to prevent addiction. It is an incredibly easy substance to become addicted to, and even slightly deviating from the doctor's orders can lead to trouble.

## WITHDRAWAL

As with any opioid, once a person lowers their dose or ceases to use the drug all at once, they will experience withdrawal symptoms that range from uncomfortable to excruciating.



These often lead them back to use. These symptoms include:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Panic attacks
- Nausea and vomiting
- Insomnia
- Muscle and bone pain
- Muscular weakness
- Fever
- Flu-like symptoms
- Kidney function impairment
- Cardiovascular complications
- Liver damage
- All-over body pain

## OVERDOSE

Overdose is the most serious risk of OxyContin abuse. Any use of this drug could result in an overdose, even if the user does not regularly take the drug. Even chewing a single pill can have negative effects, as the pills are designed to be immediately swallowed, and dissolved slowly over the course of 12 hours to begin working. Breaking the pill in any way can cause overdosage of the drug which can lead to many negative side effects. Overdose symptoms include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Slowed or stopped breathing
- Excessive sleepiness
- Limp or weak muscles
- Narrowing or widening of the pupils
- Cold, clammy skin
- Unresponsiveness



**“ SINCE OXYCONTIN WAS INTRODUCED IN 1996, OXYCODONE-RELATED DEATHS HAVE INCREASED 100 PERCENT ”**

## A NATIONAL EPIDEMIC

In the past, pharmaceutical companies reassured the medical community that patients would not become addicted to opioid pain relievers like OxyContin. As a result, doctors began prescribing these drugs at greater rates. This led to misuse of both prescription and non-prescription opioids before it became clear just how addictive these drugs were. Since OxyContin was introduced in 1996, oxycodone-related deaths have increased 100 percent, and emergency room visits have increased 400 percent. Recently, the opioid epidemic was declared a national public health emergency.

## ABUSERS ARE DESPERATE

Many users of OxyContin began taking the drug after a medical procedure in order to suppress their pain and fell into a cycle of abuse. In order to get more of the drug, abusers will report to a hospital and claim they are in severe pain, requesting more OxyContin. Often, doctors will listen to their pleas and simply want to alleviate their pain, only worsening the problem. After a while, doctors will catch on to the abusers and will no longer prescribe. The abuser resorts to going from doctor to doctor in hopes of getting their next high. Some have even been known to fake medical records and pretend to need a wheelchair in order to gain access to the drug.

## AVOIDING ADDICTION

The best way to never become dependent on OxyContin is to only take the drug when prescribed by a doctor. It is incredibly easy to become hooked even after a short time using.

The bottom line is that OxyContin is too addictive and too dangerous to risk dying for.