

What Are Opioids?

Opioids are powerful, highly addictive narcotics that mimic chemicals in the brain and body. Commonly prescribed to treat pain, opioids trick the brain into feeling pleasure. But while opioids can make a real, positive difference for people living with chronic pain, they should always be taken with extreme caution.



Help Stop the Epidemic

It only takes a few simple steps. First, expect that you will have some pain after surgery or an injury. Then, follow your doctor's instructions about taking medication. But don't be afraid to ask questions or seek safer, effective opioid alternatives—be your own best advocate.

Make sure you store medications carefully and get rid of unused drugs at drug disposal sites. And protect your identity by removing labels. You just might save someone's life—especially someone you know and love.

Pain Killers Can Be Just Plain Killers

What you should know about
opioids and the opioid epidemic
in South Carolina.

Get More Information

There is plenty of additional information out there about opioids. Do your own research and become more informed. To learn how to talk to your loved ones, or where to get help and find treatment in South Carolina, visit JustPlainKillers.com.

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4 in 5 heroin users started by misusing prescription painkillers.

Opioids can affect your brain and cause dependency in just 3 days.

In 2023, there were 1,704 overdose deaths in S.C. related to opioids—and nearly 91% of opioid-related deaths involved fentanyl.

Opioid deaths in 2023 are still nearly double pre-pandemic levels.

Opioid Prescription Facts

- Roughly **1 IN 10** people prescribed opioids for chronic pain develop an addiction.
- In 2023, nearly **2.5 MILLION** opioid prescriptions were filled in S.C.—1 for every 2 people in the state.
- Every **9 SECONDS**, an opioid prescription is filled in S.C.

Addiction Is a Disease

Addiction to opioids, also known as opioid use disorder, is a chronic disease characterized by drug use that is compulsive or difficult to control, despite harmful consequences. Opioids **CHANGE THE BRAIN**, making it difficult to quit without the right support. It's not shameful or embarrassing to ask for help. Treatment and prevention services are available throughout South Carolina.

Finding Help and Treatment

Recovery from opioid use disorder looks different for everyone. It might involve treatment, lifestyle changes, and/or peer and community support. What matters most is taking the first step to ask for help. Find support near you: JustPlainKillers.com/find-help

Side Effects

Like many prescription medications, opioids can have harmful side effects. These can include, but are not limited to:

DROWSINESS	SEVERE ITCHING
CONSTIPATION	ACUTE ABDOMINAL PAIN
NAUSEA	MENTAL CONFUSION
WEAK BONES	RESPIRATORY DEPRESSION
DIARRHEA	HORMONAL PROBLEMS

Opioid Alternatives

Ask your doctor or dentist about alternatives. Over-the-counter medications are safer and can be as effective in treating pain. Physical therapy, massage, acupuncture, and chiropractic care are also options.

Tips for Safe Storage

Part of what makes these drugs so dangerous is their prevalence and availability.



Secure Them Lock up prescription medication away from children and in a safe place only you know about.

No Loose Pills Prescription opioids should only be kept in the bottle provided by your pharmacy.

Always Secure After Use After taking your prescribed dose, immediately return the bottle to its secure, locked storage.

Keep Track of Quantities Know how many of your prescription pills remain so you know if any have been taken by someone else.

Find a Drug Disposal Site Remove any unused prescription medications from your home by dropping them off at a drug disposal site near you: JustPlainKillers.com/drug-safety

Naloxone and Reversing an Opioid Overdose

Naloxone can be obtained as an over-the-counter, easy-to-use nasal spray that can reverse an opioid overdose. The reasons to carry naloxone are different for everyone, but one commonality is that it can be lifesaving in an emergency. Naloxone is available without a prescription from community distributors and pharmacies across South Carolina. JustPlainKillers.com/naloxone

