Signs of Opioid Addiction

Opioid addiction doesn't always look the way people expect. Many people started with a legitimate prescription and never intended to misuse it. Others began recreationally and found they couldn't stop.

In both cases the warning signs follow a recognizable pattern. The earlier those signs are spotted, the better the chance of getting help before health, work, or relationships take serious damage.

This brochure covers what to watch for, what to do if you see it, and how to respond to an overdose.

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DRS

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What to look for

Physical Signs

What the body shows

- **Pinpoint pupils** even in low light
- **Nodding off** mid-sentence, mid-meal, at the wheel
- **Slow or shallow breathing**, especially during sleep
- **Withdrawal between doses**: sweating, muscle aches, yawning, runny nose, agitation, that resolves when more is taken
- **Unexplained weight loss**
- **Track marks**, bruising, or abscesses on arms, hands, feet, or neck

Behavioral Signs

What the person shows

- **Running out of prescriptions early**, calling for early refills
- **Visiting multiple doctors** or ERs to get more
- **Secrecy about pills**; defensiveness when asked
- **Missing cash or valuables**; unexplained money problems
- **Withdrawing** from family, friends, activities
- **Missed work or school**, declining performance
- **Planning the day** around the next dose
- **Continuing to use** despite damage to health, relationships, or work

What to do

Overdose — Act Now

- Won't wake up
- Slow, shallow, or stopped breathing
- Blue or gray lips, fingernails, skin
- Pinpoint pupils
- Gurgling or choking sounds

If you see any of those signs, act quickly.

1. **Call 911.**
2. **Give naloxone** (Narcan).
3. Start **rescue breathing**.
4. Roll them in the **recovery position**.
5. **Stay with them** until help arrives.

Narcan can wear off before the opioid does. Even if they wake up, they still need emergency care.

24/7 HELPLINE

1-800-304-2219

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