

# Treatments For Opioid Use Disorder



There are a variety of effective treatments for Opioid Use Disorder (OUD). Pharmacological treatments (medications) and behavioral treatments can be used on their own or in combination with each other to treat a person with an OUD. These methods are safe, effective and share a primary goal of helping an individual regain their health and social function.

## What Are Opioids?

Opioids are a class of drugs meant to aid in pain management by mimicking the effects of the poppy plant. Some drugs that fall under the opioid class are morphine, oxycodone, fentanyl, and heroin.

While opioids range in strength, they are all capable of being habit-forming as the body develops a tolerance to the substance.

## What is Opioid Use Disorder?

Opioid use disorder (OUD) is a form of substance use disorder characterized by problematic or inappropriate use of opioids that causes significant distress or impairment of daily functions. It is also characterized by difficulty reducing or stopping opioid use. Opioid use disorder can affect anyone. OUD can lead to overdose or death.

## Pharmacological Treatments

Pharmacological treatments, also commonly referred to as medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD), involve the use of medications designed to treat opioid use disorder. These medications support a person's recovery by helping to regulate brain chemistry, relieve cravings for the substance, and prevent withdrawal symptoms. Some treatments include:

- There are a variety of effective treatments for opioid use disorder, including medication and counseling.
  - Medications for opioid use disorder commonly block the effects of opioids, reduce cravings, and prevent withdrawal symptoms.
  - Additional treatment can include outpatient counseling, or in-patient rehabilitation programs.
  - There are many ways an individual can help ease someone's recovery journey.
- **Buprenorphine** - Suppresses and reduces cravings. It is given as a pill, an injection, or a cheek film. This drug can be prescribed by a doctor for use outside of a treatment clinic.
  - **Methadone** - Suppresses and reduces cravings and withdrawal symptoms. It also dulls or blocks the effects of opioids. It is commonly available as a daily liquid. Some clinics allow patients to take home a number of doses after consistent attendance and compliance with the program.
  - **Naltrexone** - Blocks the sedative effects of opioids and prevents the feelings of euphoria associated with use. It is available as a pill or intra-muscular injections. Unlike the others, which require a prescription from a treatment program, Naltrexone can be prescribed by any provider licensed to prescribe medication. It is only used for people who have not used opioids in at least 7-10 days.
  - **Suboxone** - A combination of Buprenorphine and naloxone. Suboxone reduces cravings and withdrawal symptoms, and blocks the effects of opioids, including pain relief and the feelings of euphoria.



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## Additional Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder

Additional treatment options for OUD can be used on their own or in partnership with pharmaceutical treatments. Medications for opioid use disorder are found to be more effective when combined with counseling and behavioral treatments.

- **Outpatient Counseling** - Counseling can help an individual process their experiences with OUD, identify their triggers, and their reasons for using substances. These treatments can be done in group sessions, in a clinic, or via telehealth appointments.
- **Inpatient Rehabilitation** - This treatment option has the individual stay in a treatment facility full-time. This allows them to be in a supportive, recovery-focused environment with fewer external distractions or temptations. However, this type of treatment can be difficult for those who have external obligations that cannot be put on hold for the duration of their stay.

## Opioid Overdose Prevention Medications

In addition to the variety of treatment options for opioid use disorder, there are also medications to prevent overdose in those with OUD.

- **Naloxone** - Used to prevent overdose, naloxone is a lifesaving drug that can be found in both injectable and nasal spray forms. Naloxone has been approved by the FDA for over-the-counter use for all ages and does not require a prescription. It is available via pharmacies and local distribution programs, including [drugfreect.org](https://www.drugfreect.org).
- **Nalmefene** - An FDA approved overdose reversal medication that comes as a nasal spray. This medication is by prescription only and is intended for healthcare and community use in people 12 and older.

## Everyone Can Play a Role

There are many ways a person can help if they suspect someone they know has an opioid use disorder.

- **Ask how to help:** Knowing what kind of support or help the person needs to enter recovery can mean a lot. Treatment and support from friends, family, and co-workers can make the recovery process easier.
- **Reduce stigma:** Stigma, or the fear of stigma, can prevent someone from sharing about their health and keep them from seeking out treatment. It is important to recognize that opioid use disorder is a treatable health condition, not a moral failing. Stopping stigma is important for helping people enter recovery and feel supported, safer, and healthier.
- **Carry naloxone:** When given in time, naloxone is a safe, non-addictive, lifesaving drug that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

## Connecticut Resources

### CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

[www.ct.gov/DMHAS](http://www.ct.gov/DMHAS)

#### Drug Free CT

<https://www.drugfreect.org/>

#### Nora App

<https://egov.ct.gov/norasaves/>

#### Live Loud

<https://liveloud.org/>

#### 24/7 Access Line

1.800.563.4086

#### 2-1-1 of Connecticut

[www.211ct.org](http://www.211ct.org) or call 2-1-1

## National Resources

### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

### National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

[www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)



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