

# We are facing an epidemic of opioid addiction and overdose deaths in Massachusetts.

For youth, opioid addiction may start when a clinician prescribes opioids following an injury; through having access to painkillers in the family medicine cabinet; or by borrowing from friends.

Opioids are powerful prescription painkillers. Examples of commonly prescribed opioids include **Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin and Fentanyl.**

Although these medications are effective when prescribed and taken appropriately, they can be misused and lead to significant negative consequences, including overdose and addiction. Some people who are addicted may even transition to heroin, which is less expensive and widely available.

## Get More Information

If you suspect your child is having a problem with prescription opioids or heroin, call the **MA Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline** for free and confidential information about substance abuse, education and counseling resources for adolescents, families and adults.

With your help we can  
**Stop Addiction**  
In Its Tracks

**Call:**  
**1-800-327-5050**  
TTY: Use MassRelay at 711  
or 1-800-720-3480

**Or Visit:**  
**[mass.gov/stopaddiction](http://mass.gov/stopaddiction)**

## Tips for Protecting Your Kids from **Addiction**



**STOP**  
**Addiction**  
**IN ITS TRACKS**



Massachusetts Department of Public Health

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## Parents: Prevent Opioid Prescription Abuse

1. **Talk to your teen** and warn them about the potential dangers of taking medications that are not prescribed for them, including addiction and overdose.
2. **Be clear with your expectations** about drug and alcohol use and follow through by supporting healthy decisions that they make.
3. **If your son or daughter needs medications while at school**, request an 8-12 hour dose so you can administer them at home. If medications must be taken during school hours, give them to the school nurse.
4. **Ask your doctor** if any medications prescribed for your family have a potential for abuse.
5. **Take a regular inventory** of medications that are kept in your home that can be abused.
6. **Keep medications in a secure location** away from your children. Consider purchasing a locked box at your local pharmacy to store medications that can be abused.

## Dispose of Unused Prescription Drugs:

- Bring unused medications to secure medication drop off boxes around the state. To find a drop box in your area, visit [www.mass.gov/DrugDropbox](http://www.mass.gov/DrugDropbox).
- Do not flush medicines down the drain unless the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs you to do so.
- Remove medications from their containers, crush them and mix them with coffee grounds or kitty litter. Place the mixture in an unmarked container, like an empty can or sealable bag, and throw the container in the trash.



## Know the Signs

Many parents are often reluctant to believe that their children may misuse or develop an addiction to prescription opioids. But anyone who experiments with these powerful medications is at risk for negative consequences, including overdose and addiction.

### Signs your child may be abusing or misusing opioids:

- Pills or medication bottles are missing from your home
- Taking medication in excess of how it has been prescribed
- Abrupt changes in their finances
- Dramatic mood changes
- Lower grades, changes in friends, or changes in sleep or appetite
- Loss of concern about appearance
- Physical signs such as fatigue, confusion, weight loss, slurred speech, dizziness and changes in pupil size

