

Opioids NOT the Answer for Chronic Pain

The opioid overdose epidemic in the U.S. killed more than 33,000 people in 2015, which is more than any other year on record, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

While the opioids referenced include both heroin and prescription opioids, **nearly half of overdose deaths involve the prescription drugs.**¹

Prescription opioids such as oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), morphine and methadone are widely prescribed for pain relief. Initially, they were intended to treat severe pain following surgery or injury or due to illnesses such as cancer.

However, they're now increasingly prescribed for many types of pain, including chronic back pain or pain from [osteoarthritis](#). Opioid prescriptions nearly quadrupled in the U.S. between 1999 and 2013, despite reported pain levels remaining stagnant.

By 2014 nearly 2 million Americans were dependent on or had abused the drugs,² and the situation is only getting worse. There are even reports that one opioid maker — Purdue Pharma — knowingly allowed its drugs to be funneled into the black market.

Drug Maker Sued for Funneling Pills Into the Black Market

Purdue Pharma is being sued by the city of Everett, Washington, which has been hard-hit by deaths from opioid painkiller and heroin abuse.

The suit alleges that Purdue Pharma, which manufactures OxyContin, supplied the drug to “obviously suspicious pharmacies and physicians and enabl[ed] the illegal diversion of [OxyContin](#) into the black market” in the city.³

Mayor Ray Stephanson told CBS News that the city has been significantly damaged and its resources, including first responders and even crews cleaning up syringes in public parks, significantly strained as a result of the drugs flowing into their community.

The case is built around a 2016 investigation by the Los Angeles Times, which revealed OxyContin was being trafficked illegally from California to Washington, and suggested Purdue Pharma knew about it but did nothing to stop it.⁴ The drug maker is no stranger to litigation. CBS News reported:⁵

“In 2007, Purdue Pharma and its executives paid more than \$630 million in legal penalties to the federal government for willfully misrepresenting the drug’s addiction risks.

The same year, it also settled with Washington and other states that claimed the company aggressively marketed OxyContin to doctors while downplaying the addiction risk. As part of that settlement, it agreed to continue internal controls to identify potential diversion or abuse.”

Drug Companies Ship 433 Pain Pills for Every Person in West Virginia

A Charleston Gazette-Mail investigation in 2016 revealed that drug companies shipped 780 million hydrocodone and oxycodone pills to West Virginia over a six-year period, as more than 1,700 state residents died from overdoses of the drugs. That’s enough to provide 433 pills for every person (including children) in the state.

As occurred in Washington, drug makers seemingly looked the other way while shipping massive amounts of the drugs to small mom-and-pop pharmacies. The Gazette-Mail reported:¹⁴

“For more than a decade, the same distributors disregarded rules to report suspicious orders for controlled substances in West Virginia to the state Board of Pharmacy, the Gazette-Mail found.

And the board failed to enforce the same regulations that were on the books since 2001, while giving spotless inspection reviews to small-town pharmacies in the southern counties that ordered more pills than could possibly be taken by people who really needed medicine for pain.

As the fatalities mounted — hydrocodone and oxycodone overdose deaths increased 67 percent in West Virginia between 2007 and 2012 — the drug shippers’ CEOs collected salaries and bonuses in the tens of millions of dollars. Their companies made billions.”

Dietary Changes and Additional Pain Relief Options

When physicians don't know how to effectively treat chronic pain, they resort to the only treatment they know: prescription drugs, which will do nothing to solve the underlying reasons why you're in pain. Toward that end, if you suffer from chronic pain, there's a good chance you need to [tweak your diet](#) as follows:

1. **Start taking a high-quality, animal-based omega-3 fat like krill oil.** [Omega-3 fats](#) are precursors to mediators of inflammation called prostaglandins. (In fact, that is how anti-inflammatory painkillers work: they positively influence prostaglandins.) The omega-3 fats EPA and DHA contained in krill oil have been found in many animal and clinical studies to have anti-inflammatory properties, which are beneficial for pain relief.
2. **Reduce your intake of most processed foods** as not only do they contain sugar and additives, but also most are loaded with omega-6 fats that upset your delicate omega-3 to omega-6 ratio. This, in turn, will contribute to inflammation, a key factor in most pain.
3. **Eliminate or radically reduce most grains and sugars** (especially fructose) from your diet. Avoiding grains and sugars will lower your insulin and leptin levels. Elevated insulin and leptin levels are one of the most profound stimulators of inflammatory prostaglandin production. That is why eliminating sugar and grains is so important to controlling your pain.
4. **Optimize your production of [vitamin D](#)** by getting regular, appropriate sun exposure, which will work through a variety of different mechanisms to reduce your pain. This satisfies your body's appetite for regular sun exposure.

Finally, the natural pain-relief methods that follow are useful for ongoing and lasting pain relief and management:

- **Chiropractic adjustments:** According to a study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine and funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), patients with neck pain who used a chiropractor and/or exercise were more than twice as likely to be pain-free in 12 weeks compared to those who took medication.²⁵
- **Massage:** Massage releases endorphins, which help induce relaxation, relieve pain and reduce levels of stress chemicals such as cortisol and noradrenaline.
- **Acupuncture:** Researchers concluded that acupuncture has a definite effect in reducing chronic pain such as [back pain](#) and headaches — more so than standard pain treatment.²⁶