

OPIATES

Opiate addiction is an increasingly serious problem in the United States, with fatalities on the rise. According to a recent [study](#) from the National Center for Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 115 people in the United States die every day from opioid overdoses. Deaths in the U.S. from drug overdoses in general and opiate overdoses in particular have risen dramatically over the past 20 years. In recent years, drug overdoses have become the *most common* cause of death in U.S. citizens under 50.

The word “opiates” covers a wide range of substances, from legal prescription drugs like morphine, oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, fentanyl; to illegal street drugs like opium and heroin. One of the factors contributing to the rise in opioid-related overdoses is an increase in synthetic opioids like fentanyl, which accounted for more than 20,000 deaths in 2016 alone, [according](#) to the CDC.

Even legally prescribed opioid drugs can lead to addiction, especially if they are abused, or used over a long period of time. Opioids give users a sense of euphoria, to which users can build up a tolerance, requiring higher and higher doses to achieve the same effect. This can lead to accidental overdoses, as users reach for a stronger high, without realizing that while the euphoric effects are diminished due to their increasing tolerance, the *dangerous* effects of the drug are not diminished at all. This can occur both with illegal drugs and legal prescription drugs, used unsafely. Fentanyl, for example, can be legally prescribed as a pain medication, but it has an extremely high liability of dependence. Moreover, patients who are legally prescribed an opioid medication will sometimes transition to an illegal opioid like heroin.

Detoxification from opiates is an arduous, often painful process for which patients are often in need of both clinical and emotional support, which can be offered by Soul Surgery. Soul Surgery’s team of licensed professional clinicians and counselors trained in substance abuse issues are available to alleviate a patient’s detoxification and transition into sobriety.

Recovering from opioid addiction usually begins with several questions asked by the patient’s healthcare provider: how long was the drug in question being abused? When did the patient most recently take the drug? How does the patient normally acquire the drug? The answers to these questions factor into how severe a patient’s opiate withdrawals are likely to be, and may change the course of action for the patient’s treatment.

Withdrawal symptoms from opioids can be very intense and often severe. The patient will often experience muscular pain, sweating, agitation, and anxiety, not to mention dilated pupils and watery eyes. Gastrointestinal withdrawal symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps and pain, and diarrhea. A quickened heart rate, goose bumps, tremors, and insomnia are also common. While rarely life-threatening, these symptoms can be extremely painful, and the pain from withdrawal symptoms may put the user at a higher risk of relapse.

Symptoms of acute withdrawal (the first phase of opiate withdrawal) begin approximately twelve hours after the patient last took the drug. These can last between one week and one month, and this is when most of the physical withdrawal symptoms occur. Post-acute withdrawal symptoms (the second phase of opiate withdrawal) can last up to two years. These symptoms are predominantly emotional symptoms, and not as severe as those of acute withdrawal, but include low enthusiasm, mood swings, disturbed sleep, variable energy, and variable concentration.

As part of a broader integrated treatment plan including therapy and other treatments, medication-assisted treatment can sometimes help a patient undergoing these withdrawal symptoms. This can include medications like methadone, buprenorphine, or naltrexone, which, when administered under the care and supervision of licensed medical professionals, can alleviate a patient’s withdrawal symptoms and decrease their risk of relapse.

Of course, medication-assisted treatment should not be administered as a stand-alone treatment, but in combination with other work towards a patient’s stability. This can include work with twelve-step programs, such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA), counseling, and other types of therapies.

At Soul Surgery’s addiction and mental health center in Scottsdale Arizona, a wide variety of progressive, evidence-based, integrated treatments for opiate addiction are available. Soul Surgery has fully licensed Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOP), Partial Hospitalization Programs (PHP) and Outpatient (OP) programs that offer treatments such as counseling, psychoeducational group work, twelve-step work, bio movement, IV therapy, craniosacral therapy, bio feedback, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), medication-assisted treatment, and many other services. These integrated treatments are deeply important to a patient’s success, and Soul Surgery cares for all aspects of a patient’s health: mental, emotional, and physical recovery. Soul Surgery’s team of licensed medical professionals and counselors trained in substance abuse issues are available to help every patient determine a course of treatment that will positively impact their physical, mental, and emotional health and assist them on their journey to maintaining long-term sobriety.