



## PAIGE'S STORY

"Yep, they definitely have to come out." Paige had been dreading getting her wisdom teeth out, and her dentist just confirmed her worst nightmare. Even though all of her friends had had their wisdom teeth removed, Paige was just terrified of the recovery process, especially since she had never had surgery before. "The good news is that you can schedule your surgery for while you're on winter break, so you won't miss any school. You'll just be able to take it easy," her dentist said. "They'll even likely give you Vicodin or OxyContin so you won't even be in any pain afterwards."

A few weeks later, as Paige snuggled in her bed with a heating pad against her jaw, she noticed a shadowy figure sneak by her nightstand. The Vicodin made her extremely disoriented and exhausted, but she was pleased she wasn't in too much pain. She saw her brother open her prescription bottle, take a few pills, and then quietly sneak out of her room. "He must've thought I was sleeping," Paige thought to herself. "I need to tell my mom to hide my pills until I need them." As she waited for her mom to come and check on her, Paige drifted back to sleep.

A few hours later, when her mom came to bring Paige some water, Paige remembered what she had seen and knew what she had to do. "Mom, I need to tell you something. I don't want to get Peter in trouble, but I saw him take some of my painkillers. I think he thought I was sleeping and wouldn't notice him." Horrified, Paige's mother rushed to the nightstand, opened up the bottle, and began counting them. "You're right. Some are definitely missing. I'll take care of it." Luckily, Peter hadn't tried taking or selling any of the Vicodin yet, and their mother took extra special care to make sure he wouldn't find them again, and she had a long discussion with both Paige and Peter once Paige was feeling better. "Do you know how much trouble your brother could've gotten into if he had tried selling these, or if he had taken them himself? They're extremely easy to get addicted to, and it's really easy to overdose on them!"

## TEST YOURSELF

1. Opioids are depressants.  
a. True      b. False
2. Percs is a slang term for OxyContin.  
a. True      b. False
3. 75% of current heroin users admitted to getting addicted to prescription opioids first.  
a. True      b. False
4. Opioids and Opiates basically mean the same thing—they refer to the class of drugs that act as depressants on the central nervous system to relieve pain.  
a. True      b. False
5. Which of the following is NOT a symptom of withdrawal?  
a. Anxiety      b. Nausea  
c. Feeling euphoric      d. Headaches

Answers: 1. A 2. B 3. A 4. A 5. C

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# OPIOIDS



PROBLEM WITH PAINKILLERS

## WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

The term "opioids" covers a massive variety of drugs, all ranging from legal drugs like morphine to illegal drugs like heroin. Their main function is acting on the central nervous system to relieve pain. Legal opioids like oxycodone, codeine or morphine are safe when prescribed by a doctor for a short time and in small doses. When abused—taken without a prescription, in larger quantities or in the incorrect way—opioids can lead to some feelings of euphoria on top of pain relief, but they can also lead to addiction, overdose or death. The most commonly known opioid brands are: Demerol, Percocet, Vicodin and OxyContin.

## "OPIOIDS VS. OPIATES?"

### Is there a difference?

The words "opioid" and "opiate" are often used interchangeably, and they both work to relieve pain on the central nervous system. However, the main difference is how they're created. The name "opioid" encompasses drugs that include synthetic and semi-synthetic versions of the opiate chemicals. The word "opiate" refers to drugs that naturally come from the active narcotic parts of the opium poppy plant. Whether they are referred to as "opioids" or "opiate," even the legal drugs can be extremely dangerous because they lead to dependence.

## WHAT'S THE LINGO?

### Street Names

Since there are so many drugs that fall under the classification, there are even more slang terms that circulate the streets. For example, Perks or Percs refer to Percocet; Oxy 80 and Oxycat refer to OxyContin; Demmies and Miss Emma refer to Demerol and morphine.



## SIGNS OF ABUSE

### Know the Dangers

You or someone you may know may have a problem with opioid abuse. Here are some common physical signs:

- Small pupils
- Noticeable euphoria or extreme feelings of happiness
- Drowsiness or even passing out
- Constipation
- Slowed breathing
- Confusion

## BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

Reach out to them if you see any of the following:

- They "shop for doctors"—meaning they keep getting multiple prescriptions from various doctors.
- Extra pill bottles appearing in the trash
- Social withdrawal/isolation
- Dramatically changing moods

## LONG TERM SIGNS OF ABUSE

If you don't die from overdose first, here are some other deadly side effects of opiate abuse:

- Weakened, or practically nonexistent, immune systems
- Gastric problems ranging from mild (constipation) to deadly (perforated bowel)
- Infections at injection sites. Most people inject opioids with needles in their arms to get a quicker effect. Using dirty needles can cause infections like abscesses or blood transmitted diseases like HIV or AIDS.
- Organ Damage. Your lungs, liver, stomach, intestines and kidneys can all be harmed by opioid abuse and begin to fail.

## WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

Depending on the drug, many people can become addicted instantly, or they may build up an addiction over time. Regardless, many of the withdrawals are the same:

- Headaches
- Feeling nauseated and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sweating
- Anxiety
- Exhaustion but not being able to sleep

## FACTS AND STATS OF OPIATE USE IN THE UNITED STATES

- A survey in 2010 revealed that of the 210 million opioid prescriptions filled, 12 million people admitted to abusing opioids by taking them for non-medical reasons.
- 75% of heroin users started out by abusing prescription opioids.
- More people died from opioid overdose than any other overdose of an illicit drug combined.

## TEENS AND OPIOIDS

Opioids are actually pretty easy for teens to get, particularly Vicodin and OxyContin, because it's pretty commonly prescribed for pain, especially for after surgery. They think because it's prescribed by a physician, certain opioids can't be dangerous. They are greatly mistaken!

Parents should also be careful in watching their children to prevent them from using opioids. It is estimated that last year, 3% of high school students have misused OxyContin, and 8% have abused Vicodin. While only 1% of high school seniors have used heroin, the teens who have abused Vicodin or OxyContin are more likely to try heroin in their lifetime if they become dependent and search for something harder. Teens are also more likely to try combining an opioid with alcohol. Since both are depressants, the combined usage can cause you to stop breathing!

