

THE OPIOID CRISIS

**I Pledge My...
Health to
Better Living**

*What you need to
know about opioids*

**I Pledge My...
Hands To
Larger Service**

*How can you be a
part of opioid misuse
prevention in your
community*



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ABOUT JOURNEYS MAGAZINE

Journeys is a magazine for middle school students produced by Georgia 4-H. This issue, *Journeys in Health and Safety: The Opioid Crisis*, is the second edition of our Georgia 4-H Middle School publication series. A journey is described as a trip, expedition, excursion or a tour. While this *Journeys* magazine won't allow you to physically take a trip, expedition, excursion or tour, we do hope it allows your mind to explore the content and concepts shared in the pages ahead.

The Chinese philosopher, Laozi, is credited with the saying, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." We hope this magazine begins a journey of exploration for you. Georgia 4-H can offer you many paths to explore in hopes of finding one that is of interest to you. In the pages ahead, you will read about individuals who credit Georgia 4-H for helping them find a path to their chosen career or college major. Through independent project work, content or subject exploration, public speaking experience, service to your community, and efforts to be part of a team, Georgia 4-H is excited to be a small part of your journey toward becoming a leader.

Join us on this journey to learn more about opioids, career opportunities related to health, and the importance of serving others, especially how you can help prevent opioid misuse in your community.



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Georgia 4-H is a partner in public education and strives to incorporate relevant Georgia standards in education materials for in-school use. The following Georgia Performance Standards for Health Education are correlated to the content delivery included in this publication.

HE6/7/8.1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.

HE6/7/8.3: Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information and products and services to enhance health.

HE6/7/8.7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risk.

HE6/7/8.8: Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.



Think Green! Not just 4-H Green...but let's help do our part to recycle and reuse. Save this book, reread it or pass it along to a friend. If it's too worn, please recycle it.

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Opioids:

What to Know



Prescription opioids are medications that are chemically similar to endorphins – opioids that our body makes naturally to relieve pain. They are also similar to the illegal drug heroin. In nature, opioids are found in the seed pod of the opium poppy plant. Prescription opioids usually come in pill or liquid form, and are given to treat severe pain—for example, pain from dental surgery, serious sports injuries, or cancer. Opioid medications can be natural, created in labs from natural opioids, or synthetic (human-made). You can find the names and common names of some opioid medications in the box at the bottom of this page.

It is important to know what type of medications you are taking so that you can ask your doctor questions and make the best choices for your body. If you are in the hospital, they can be given through an IV (IV means intravenous- a needle and tube is used) in your arm. Opioids are sometimes prescribed to treat pain that lasts a long time (this type of pain is called chronic pain), but it is unclear if they are effective for long term pain.

When opioids are taken as prescribed by a medical professional for a short time, they can be relatively safe and can reduce pain effectively. However, taking prescription opioids puts you at risk for dependence and addiction. Dependence means you feel withdrawal symptoms when you stop taking the drug. Continued use can lead to addiction, where you continue to seek out the drug and use it despite negative consequences. These risks increase when the medications are misused. Prescription medications are some of the most commonly misused drugs by teens, after tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana.

Short-Term Effects

In addition to pain relief, other effects of opioids include:

- sleepiness
- confusion
- nausea (feeling sick to the stomach)
- constipation
- slowed or stopped breathing

Mixing prescription opioid medications with alcohol can cause a dangerous slowing of the heart rate and breathing. This can lead to a coma or death.

Long-Term Effects

People who use prescription opioid medicines for a long period of time increase their risk of addiction and overdose.

Fentanyl

You may have heard about Fentanyl in the news. It is a powerful synthetic (human-made) opioid that is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine, and is prescribed for extreme pain. It is extremely dangerous if misused, and is sometimes added to illicit drugs sold by drug dealers.

When opioids enter the brain, they attach to molecules on cells known as opioid receptors. These receptors are located in many areas of the brain and body, especially areas involved in feelings of pain and pleasure, as well as a part of the brain that regulates breathing. Opioids affect the brain's "reward circuit," causing euphoria (the "high") and flooding the brain with the chemical messenger dopamine. Surges of dopamine in the reward circuit encourage you to continue pleasurable but unhealthy behaviors like taking drugs, leading you to repeat the behavior again and again. Repeated surges from drug-taking can lead to addiction.

Adapted From: National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020, August 20). Prescription Pain Medications (Opioids). Retrieved September 10, 2020, from <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/prescription-pain-medications-opioids>

BE AWARE: WHAT PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS ARE CALLED

1. **OXYCODONE** - (OxyContin®, Percodan®, Percocet®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), diphenoxylate (Lomotil®)
2. **MORPHINE** (Kadian®, Avinza®), codeine, fentanyl (Duragesic®), propoxyphene (Darvon®), **HYDROMORPHONE** (Dilaudid®), meperidine (Demerol®), methadone
3. You may hear these drugs called: Happy Pills, Hillbilly Herion, OC, Oxy, Percs, or Vikes

Remember: These drugs are used to treat severe pain, often after surgeries or injuries. They can have very serious side effects. Read on in this magazine to learn more about opioids and safety.

Opioid Misuse

A Big Problem

Opioid misuse has become a big problem in the United States. For this reason, you may hear this problem called “The Opioid Crisis” or “The Opioid Epidemic”. The word “epidemic” is used to describe a situation when there is a large increase in the number of cases of a disease in an area. Although the word “epidemic” is most often used to describe infectious diseases, it has been widely used to describe the opioid misuse problem in the United States.

In the United States:

10.1 million
people
misused prescription opioids in 2019.

70,630
people
died from drug overdose in 2019.

Good News! Opioid misuse is decreasing among teens. Misuse of prescription opioid medications among teens has dropped significantly since 2002 despite high opioid overdose rates among adults.

In 2016, 3.6 percent of adolescents ages 12-17 reported misusing opioids over the past year. This percentage is twice as high among older adolescents and young adults ages 18-25. Past-year misuse of Vicodin® and OxyContin® among 12th graders is at a record low, dropping from 9.6 percent in 2002 to 1.1 percent in 2019 for Vicodin®, and from 4 percent in 2002 to 1.7 percent in 2019 for OxyContin®.

Studies show that students in the 12th grade believe that opioids are harder to obtain than in the past. In 2018, 32.5 percent of students in 12th grade believed that these drugs were easily accessible, as compared to 54 percent in 2010.



Why is addressing opioid misuse important?

Opioid misuse could affect anyone. Because some opioid drugs are legal and needed for pain relief in some situations, they may be easier to obtain or people may think they are more safe than they really are. Effects of opioids can include sleepiness, confusion, nausea, constipation, and slowed or stopped breathing which can lead to death. Long term use can lead to increased risk for addiction and overdose. Addiction and other side effects can have negative effects on a person's life at home, work, school, and with their friends.

In Georgia:

From 2010 to 2020, the total number of opioid-related overdose deaths in Georgia increased by 207%. In October 2017, HHS declared the opioid crisis a national public health emergency. In 2020, 67% of drug overdose deaths in Georgia were related to opioids—1,309 total.

Opioids, specifically fentanyl, appear to be driving these increases. From 2019 to 2021, fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased by 218.4 percent.

United States Department of Health and Human Services. (2021, October 21). What is the U.S. Opioid Epidemic? Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/about-the-epidemic/index.html>.

Georgia Department of Public Health. Opioid and Substance Misuse Response. (2021, July 28). Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://dph.georgia.gov/stopopioidaddiction>.

Georgia Office of the Attorney General. Opioid Abuse. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://law.georgia.gov/key-issues/opioid-abuse>.

Spotlight on Careers

Dr. Henry Young is a national expert on medication use. Dr. Young is the Kroger Associate Professor of Community Pharmacy and the Director of Pharmaceutical Health Services, Outcomes and Policy at the University of Georgia (UGA). In his role as a professor at UGA, Dr. Young is both a teacher and a researcher but his overall goal is to solve problems- big problems that affect people's overall health and well-being. He teaches students in the College of Pharmacy about medication use and community health. As a researcher, he considers it his job to answer questions that are important for the community and develop ideas and strategies for how to solve those problems. One of the big problems that Dr. Young is helping to solve is the opioid problem in Georgia.

Dr. Young is helping to address the opioid problem in Georgia in several different ways. There is great potential for opioid drugs to be misused, but Dr. Young wants to help find ways to avoid the negative outcomes of these drugs and promote their safe and appropriate use because these medications can play an important role in pain management. In particular, Dr. Young is interested in how to help rural communities and underserved populations. To do this, he collects and analyzes data about prescription medication use and community health resources. He views the people in the communities he works in as integral to this step. His research is called "community based participatory research" because he invites members of the community to be a part of the research process through sharing their experiences and needs. With this information in hand, he helps to improve public awareness about safe medication use by writing and compiling resources for the public to help them learn about medication safety. Finally, he researches the effects of these public awareness, education, and community resource efforts to determine what kinds of things help people and communities to use medication safely in a way that supports their overall well-being.

Dr. Young became interested in health research as a young adult, but he did not always know that he wanted to be a professor. Dr. Young went to high school in Miami and was interested in architecture. He even won a national drafting competition for which he received \$1000 and a computer to continue his studies. He decided to go to college to continue to learn and expand his experiences.



Dr. Young ended up changing his major three times as he learned about all the options and opportunities available to him. He credits a college experience as a research assistant as being what moved him towards his future career. The researcher who he worked for was investigating the effects that certain important medications had on the quality of life of children. Dr.

Young became very interested in how the medications that people need to take for their health can impact the lives at home, school, and work. He got a firsthand look at how medications and their effects than impact the way people interact with their families and how they behave at home and school. This experience helped him to refine his interest and focus on human behavior and health.

Dr. Young received his B.S. and PhD from the University of Florida. His B.S. degree is in Liberal Arts and Sciences with a major in Psychology and a minor in business administration. His PhD is in Pharmaceutical Sciences with an emphasis on Pharmacy Administration. He also has a Certificate of Health Communication. Dr. Young's career has taken him all over the US. Before he came to UGA, Dr. Young was a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and before that he was a post-doctoral researcher at the University of California, Davis. Dr. Young has written many research articles in scholarly journals about how medication use affects communities, as he has also written a book chapter on how advertising of prescription drugs affects physician-patient communication.

The success Dr. Young has found in his career and his ability to help others through teaching and research is due not only to his own strong initiative, hard work, and passion, but also to some important people that helped him along the way. Dr. Young credits several mentors with helping him discover his interests, build his skills, and become the person he is today. These include his pastor, one of his first supervisors, a professor, and his high school drafting teacher. Dr. Young's advice for any young person interested in a career helping others is to explore and stay curious. He believes that if you keep your eyes open, you can see problems in your communities and start to solve them- the first step to look around and see how you can make the world a better place!



Counselor

Dr. Davis Palmour, DD, NCC, CHT is a board certified counselor and therapist. He worked for over 20 years on college campuses; for the last 14 years he has had an office in Dahlonega, GA. He also teaches parenting classes for parents who are going through

a divorce or for parents who are incarcerated. He is motivated by helping others, and enjoys seeing the light come on in his client's life as they work together. Dr. Palmour's work is related to opioid prevention because he helps families build strong relationships, which can be a protective factor against opioid misuse. His advice for young people interested in a career similar to his is to learn all that they can before deciding what to do. Dr. Palmour has a son and enjoys living in Dahlonega, Georgia.

Medical Doctor

Dr. Jonathan Poon is a Family Medicine Physician in Elberton, Georgia, the rural town in which he grew up. He works in a private practice and in a hospital, while also serving as the Elbert County Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Medical Director and the Medical



Director for a local hospice agency. He believes that patient education is an important part of the serving his patients. When Dr. Poon prescribes pain medicines, like opioids, he understands that drugs hide the pain, whether physically, emotional or spiritual, and helps patients consider sources other than addictive drugs for treatment, such as rehab or counseling. His advice to someone interested in family practice are to stay curious, persevere, keep your goals in front of you and always keep learning. Dr. Poon was an active Elbert County 4-H'er. He is married to Alysia and has a son and two daughters.

DETOUR

Here are some career-related questions for you to think about...

- Have you ever considered a career related to health?
- What skills do you have that can be applied to careers related to health?
- What might you do to gain more experience in the area of health?



Emergency Medical Service Director

Anna Sheridan is the Director of Greene County's Emergency Medical Service. Prior to this role, she was a Clinical Lead Flight Paramedic Air Evac Lifeteam 140 out of Milledgeville, Georgia. Anna first worked as a Certified Nursing

Assistant (CNA), then completed her Volunteer Fire Fighter and First Responder training at 18, went on to pursue Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training and later completed Paramedic school earning her National Registry Certification. Anna has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology and an Associate's of Nursing, making her a Registered Nurse as well. As an emergency medical professional, she delivers school addresses warning students about the dangers of using opioids and works with law enforcement officers to educate and train them on using Narcan, an opioid overdose reversal drug. Her advice to anyone wanting to go into the emergency medical field is to shadow, apprentice or intern. Anna was a very active 4-H'er in Elbert County, and you might not be surprised to learn that her 4-H project was on safety! She now resides on a small farm with her husband, Chris, and sons Jake and Luke.

School Resource Officer

Marc Fleming is the Assistant Chief of Police with the Elbert County School District (ECSD) Police, working as the School Resource Officer for Elbert County Middle School where his primary job is staff and students' safety.

Marc teaches a drug education program called ELITE (Educated Leaders In Training for Elbert) to fifth-grade students, sharing the dangers of experimenting with drugs, alcohol and prescription pills. He uses real life stories of people affected by these substances, which he witnessed firsthand in his previous role as a Deputy Sheriff. The ECSD Police hosts a summer camp, allowing him the opportunity to build positive relationships between law enforcement officers and the youth community. His advice to those who pursue law enforcement as a career is to always strive to serve others and seek to make your community a better place. In addition to his law enforcement duties, he coaches wrestling for the middle school and is a former youth football coach. Marc grew up in Elbert County 4-H. Marc is married to Kitzie, and together they have two sons, Carter and Hudson, and a daughter, Ella Kate.





Safe Handling and Storage

Over half of youth aged 12 to 17 who misused prescription pain relievers got them because they were shared by, purchased from, or taken from family or friends. When opioid medications are prescribed by a doctor for an appropriate use, there are steps that should be taken to handle and store these medications safely. In fact, you can follow these steps for all prescription medications.

- Prescription medications should only be taken by the person they are prescribed for. Do NOT share prescription medications.
- Medications should be stored out of sight of and out of reach of children and guests.
- Use a lock on a cabinet or a lock box.
- Make sure that the safety cap is locked and will not come off easily.
- Keep medications in their original containers with their original labels, even when you are packing for a trip.

Safe Disposal

Safe disposal of opioid medications, as well as other prescription medication is very important. If these medications are not safely disposed of, they are more likely to be misused. Unused medications should be disposed of as soon as possible.

The BEST way to dispose of opioid medications is through a medication Take Back program. Many law enforcement offices offer a drop box for safe disposal 24/7.

If you cannot access a take-back program, you should follow special instruction for putting the medications in the trash:

- Remove the medication from the original container.
- Mix the medication with something inedible, like coffee grounds or kitty litter.
- Remove any personal information from the container's label, including the Rx number.
- Place the empty container and the mixture in a sealed bag or empty can.

Know what to do if you or others need help. In the event of a medical emergency, call 911.

For access to services and immediate crisis help,

call the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) 1-800-715-4225, available 24/7.

988 is the new 3-digit dialing code that can route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Adapted From: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2017, November). Rx Pain Medications, Know the Options, Get the Facts: Safe Storage of Prescription Medicines. Retrieved September 10, 2020, from <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Rx-Pain-Medications-Know-the-Options-Get-the-Facts-/SMA17-5053-11>

Adapted From: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2017, November). Rx Pain Medications, Know the Options, Get the Facts: Safe Disposal of Prescription Medicines. Retrieved September 10, 2020, from <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Rx-Pain-Medications-Know-the-Options-Get-the-Facts-/SMA17-5053-10>

How can I help my community?

You can be an advocate for preventing opioid abuse in your community, but the first step is to take care of YOU! What are three things that you have learned that will help you stay safe and make the best choices?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Share with Friends and Family!

- **Share Your Knowledge:** Talk to your family about what you've learned
- **Make a Plan:** Ask your family if they know how to safely store and dispose of drugs that could be potentially dangerous. Make a plan as a family for how to do this.

It's great to KNOW about opioid misuse prevention and to share that information with family and friends. Sometimes, there are certain things about the setting in which we live, work, and play that might make it easier or harder for us to make a healthy choice. For example, if you have a prescription drug that you need to dispose of safely, but there is not a drug take back box near you, it may be harder to dispose of that drug safely. Below are some examples of small things that you can do to help you, your friends and family, and your community!

- Find out where the drug take back locations in your community.
- Make a poster about safe storage or disposal of prescription drugs for your school or other community location.

DETOUR

Do some research to bust these myths and misconceptions. Explain why each statement is incorrect.

- It is okay to take a friend or family member's prescription.
- Prescription medications can just be thrown in the trash if you have some leftover.
- Continued use of opioid prescription medications can not lead to addiction or dependence.
- I know the ingredients of drugs purchased on the street and how my body will respond.
- It's okay to take opioid medications and operate a vehicle.

Athletes, Injuries, and Opioid Medications

Youth athletes may be exposed to prescription opioids more than other youth due to sports related injuries. If you get seriously injured while playing a sport or working out, your doctor may prescribe pain medication. Athletes- and anyone else who is injured and need to manage their pain- can take these steps to help keep themselves safe:

- Talk to your doctor. Here are some questions you might consider asking:
 1. Is this an opioid medication? Why is this the right medication for me?
 2. Is there a possibility I could become addicted to this medication?
 3. Are there any non-opioid medications that I could take as an alternative?
 4. How long should I take this medication?
- Get some rest! Let your body heal and do not rush back to playing too soon.
- Know the facts and risks about opioid misuse.
- Ask your doctor if there are any non-prescription medication options to manage your pain.
- Use your prescribed medication only as needed and as your doctor directs. If you are no longer in pain, you don't have to keep taking pain medication just because you have medication left over.
- Don't share your medications with others, even if you think they have the same injury and you just want to help.
- Store and dispose of your medications safely- look back at page 8 for more on this topic!

Drug Enforcement Administration. Just Think Twice. Retrieved September 10, 2020, from <https://www.justthinktwice.gov/facts/preventing-opioid-misuse-among-high-school-student-athletes-playbook-students>

National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020, August 20). Prescription Pain Medications (Opioids). Retrieved September 10, 2020, from <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/prescription-pain-medications-opioids>



This information is not just for athletes!

It is for anyone who might be prescribed pain medication! In fact, dentist prescriptions account for 31% of adolescents' first exposure to opioids.

Here's some good news:

Even though sports injuries may put young athletes at greater risk for injuries that may lead to a need for prescription pain medication, participating in athletic activities may offer some protective factors against opioid misuse. Student athletes are doing something they enjoy and having positive social interactions. If you are feeling enjoyment and satisfaction in way you do, drugs may seem less interesting. As discussed in the beginning of this magazine, the human body produces natural opioids called endorphins during physical activity. These endorphins lead to good feelings and can also reduce some of the aches and pains athletes might feel from working out, but without the risks of addiction and death that opioid misuse can lead to.

National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020, June 10). Student Athletics: The "Anti-Opioid". Retrieved September 10, 2020, from <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/student-athletics-anti-opioid>

MY 4-H Journey:

Madison Brown, 4-H Healthy Living Ambassador

Madison Brown started her 4-H career as a pre-clubber attending events to watch her older sister compete. Once in the fifth grade, it was her time to shine. Her journey started with District Project Achievement, which has been a steadfast part of her 4-H participation. She has competed in projects such as Photography, Food for Health & Sport and Outdoor Recreation. Madison Mastered in the Outdoor Recreation Project her second year attending State Congress. She has also competed in Forestry Judging and Cotton Boll & Consumer Judging. Madison served on the Junior and Senior Board of Directors for Northeast District, competed in Leadership in Action winning a \$500 scholarship for her project and became a Georgia 4-H Health Ambassador. Upon graduation, she will be a Camp Counselor at Rock Eagle 4-H Center.

4-H has added a variety of skills for her toolbox. She has gained valuable leadership skills from her time as a county officer, district board and through leading several project clubs. Better communication amongst her peers is now easy for Madison because of 4-H, not to mention interviewing skills! 4-H has also taught Madison how to learn from failures and mistakes, to persevere and to be resilient in her goals. She ran for Senior Board three times before she finally made it! Her presentation skills and creativity have also been honed by 4-H.

Madison plans to attend University of North Georgia to study graphic design. The fine arts have always been her favorite classes – whether in chorus, drama or art, all of which she has participated. With art being such a big piece of her life, she feels naturally compelled to study graphic design. As a District Officer, she has learned a lot of the “behind the scenes” workings and everything that goes into digital production. During Officer Training, she had the opportunity to look at digital footprints and how it affects you, and those around you. Now she understands how she can use her love for art “to make the best better.”

As a student athlete, Madison knows the “ins and outs” of injuries. She has witnessed some of her friends be affected by opioid use for sports injury. However, knowing the



dangers associated with opioid use, Madison would like to avoid using them. Instead, her methods to treat injury include resting, physical therapy, ice/heat therapy and taking two weeks off from running. She has also witnessed opioid use in cancer patients when her grandfather was diagnosed with lung cancer. Madison's Leadership in Action Project included making “care packages” for cancer patients, perhaps a little something to keep their mind off the pain they are experiencing.

In the immediate future, Madison will be giving back to Georgia 4-H as a Summer Camp Counselor. Beyond that, she has plans to become a 4-H volunteer as well. Furthermore, she plans to be able to use her career to promote 4-H on a state or national level. Through graphic design she will be able to share her love for 4-H in many different creative ways.



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Project Achievement

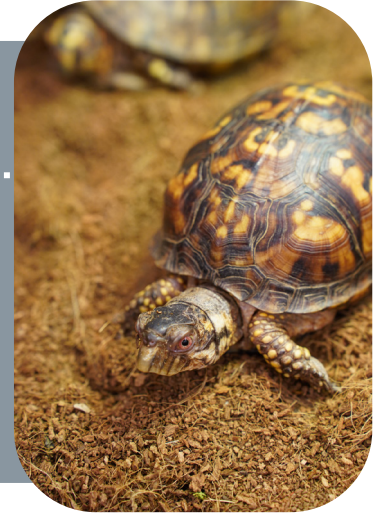


Explore Your Interests

Pursue one of your passions or select a topic that excites you! Then we will help you choose the right Project Achievement category for you to compete in based on your topic of interest.

Unleash Your Creativity

Research, write, and design your demonstration. Project Achievement is like researched and planned show-and-tell. You can choose a new topic each year or stick to one.



Share Your Story

This is your time to shine! Participants present their demonstrations in small groups to trained judges in a friendly, supportive environment.

Celebrate Your Achievements

Awards are given for top presentations in each category. You will learn about yourself and improve skills while studying the topic you chose.



Project Achievement specifically seeks to help students grow by:

- Increasing self-confidence
- Improving communication and public speaking skills
- Developing responsibility and time management skills

For more information, contact your local county Extension office!



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