

Opioids and Brain Injury Facts

Brain injuries can lead to opioid use, and opioids can lead to brain injuries:

- **70-80%** of people with brain injuries leave inpatient rehabilitation with a prescription for opioids.
- An **opioid** is a drug that relieves pain. Prescription painkillers include oxycontin, Vicodin, morphine, and oxycodone. Fentanyl and heroin are also opioids.
- Opioids can slow or stop your breathing if you take too many. If the brain goes without oxygen for more than 5-6 minutes, a person may sustain an **acquired brain injury**.
- A traumatic brain injury is an injury to the brain caused by external force, like a fall.
- People who have had moderate to severe injuries are **10 times more likely to die from an overdose** than those who don't.
- People with traumatic brain injuries are at much higher risk for opioid misuse and overdose.

What are some <u>problems</u> for people with brain injuries?

- Trouble remembering information (e.g., names, appointments, when to take medications)
- Trouble managing behavior and emotions (e.g., getting angry or upset more easily than before the injury)

What are the consequences of these problems?

- Taking too much or too little medication
- Mixing medication with drugs or alcohol
- Trouble staying in treatment for brain injury, addiction, or mental health services
- Trouble paying attention, remembering appointments, following directions, or completing tasks

--- SEE OTHER SIDE FOR SOLUTIONS ---

Tips and Strategies for Managing Opioids and Brain Injuries

Tips for Managing Common Brain Injury Challenges

- Use a physical calendar or day planner
- Use a pill organizer
- Talk with your doctor before using drugs or alcohol
- Let your doctors know you are living with a brain injury
- Post emergency medical info on your phone's lock screen image
- Explore free apps. Brainline's <u>Life-Changing Apps for People with Brain Injury</u> suggests:
 - o Accessibility apps
 - o Stress management tools
 - o Brain exercises and word games
 - Audio books
 - o Dictation apps to capture spoken language
 - o Verbal apps that speak written words
 - o Digital calendars
 - o Wheel chair accessible destinations
 - Location sharing
 - o Concussion recognition

More Strategies

- Advocate for yourself. Tell your doctors and therapists what you need to be successful (e.g., request appointment cards if you have trouble with your memory).
- Share resources and strategies that work best for you with friends and family members.
- Learn about the risks of opioid use disorder, especially after an injury.
- Become certified in giving naloxone, a medication that reverses opioid overdose.

Resources

Opioid Resources (BeforeItsTooLate.Maryland.gov)

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment (https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/locator)

Brain Injury Association of Maryland (http://biamd.org)

Ohio State Univ.'s Traumatic Brain Injury training program (http://tbi.osu.edu/modules)



This project was supported, in part by grant number 90TBSG0027-01-00, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.