

What is OxyContin?

OxyContin, a trade name for the narcotic oxycodone hydrochloride, is a painkiller available in the United States only by prescription. OxyContin is legitimately prescribed for relief of moderate to severe pain resulting from injuries, bursitis, neuralgia, arthritis, and cancer. Individuals abuse OxyContin for the euphoric effect it produces—an effect similar to that associated with heroin use.

What does OxyContin look like?

OxyContin is available as a 10 milligram (mg), 20 mg, 40 mg, or 80 mg tablet. The tablets vary in color and size according to dosage. The tablets are imprinted with the letters OC on one side and the number of milligrams on the opposite side.



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How is OxyContin abused?

OxyContin tablets have a controlled-release feature and are designed to be swallowed whole. In order to bypass the controlled-release feature, abusers either chew or crush the tablets. Crushed tablets can be snorted or dissolved in water and injected.

Who abuses OxyContin?

Individuals of all ages abuse OxyContin—data reported in the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse indicate that nearly 1 million U.S. residents aged 12 and older used OxyContin nonmedically at least once in their lifetime.

OxyContin abuse among high school students is a particular problem. Four percent of high school seniors in the United States abused the drug at least once in the past year, according to the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future Survey.

What are the risks?

Individuals who abuse OxyContin risk developing tolerance for the drug, meaning they must take increasingly higher doses to achieve the same effects. Long-term abuse of the drug can lead to physical dependence and addiction. Individuals who become dependent upon or addicted to the drug may experience withdrawal symptoms if they cease using the drug.

Withdrawal symptoms associated with OxyContin dependency or addiction include restlessness, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, cold flashes, and involuntary leg movements.

Individuals who take a large dose of OxyContin are at risk of severe respiratory depression that can lead to death. Inexperienced and new users are at particular risk, because they may be unaware of what constitutes a large dose and have not developed a tolerance for the drug.

In addition, OxyContin abusers who inject the drug expose themselves to additional risks, including contracting HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), hepatitis B and C, and other blood-borne viruses.

What is OxyContin called?

The most common names for OxyContin are OCs, ox, and oxy. (Please see the Street Terms text box for additional names.)

Street Terms for OxyContin

40 (a 40-milligram tablet)
80 (an 80-milligram tablet)
Blue
Hillbilly heroin
Kicker
Oxycotton



Other products of interest:

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Is it illegal to abuse OxyContin?

Yes, abusing OxyContin is illegal. OxyContin is a Schedule II substance under the Controlled Substances Act. Schedule II drugs, which include cocaine and methamphetamine, have a high potential for abuse. Abuse of these drugs may lead to severe psychological or physical dependence.

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Questions and Answers



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