Reducing Harm & Finding Help, Cont.

People who wish to stop using opioids should be aware that withdrawal will occur, but that it does not always need to be medically-supervised. However, physicians, detox facilities, and addiction treatment programs can help with withdrawal. Treatment for opioid addiction may include medications and counseling. Effective medications, used along with treatment, include methadone, buprenorphine (Suboxone, Subutex, Bunavail and Probuphine), and naltrexone (ReVia, Depade, and Vivitrol Extended Release). These drugs can help to manage drug cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Effective types of counseling for opioid addiction include cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, and twelve-step facilitation. Opioid addiction can be treated in a residential setting (often called “rehab”) or in an outpatient setting (when the patient lives at home, but goes to treatment appointments 1-7 times per week).

There are also recovery support groups and online forums that can help people struggling with opioid addiction. Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, and groups like SMART Recovery or LifeRing are all available to support people with opioid addiction. Recovery apps specific to opioid addiction can be downloaded to your smart phone that provide lists of recovery support meetings, reading material, tools like sobriety counters, and more.
Reducing Harm & Finding Help

Many people use prescription opioids safely and as they are prescribed. If you have health concerns related to an opioid prescription, talk with your doctor. There are other approaches to treating pain.

People who use opioids can reduce their risk of harm by being educated about what drugs they are taking. They can avoid mixing opioids with other drugs, especially alcohol and benzodiazepines. This is important because most overdose deaths involve more than one drug. Finally, people who inject opioids can use new syringes and other injection equipment.

Information on safe injection techniques, preventing drug overdoses and reducing drug-related harm for opioid users can be downloaded from the Harm Reduction Coalition website.

If it is available in your state, naloxone (often sold under the brand name Narcan) is a valuable tool for people who use opioids. Naloxone reverses opioid overdoses. It can be injected into a muscle or sprayed into the nose with a nasal spray device. Naloxone may be available through your primary care provider, pharmacy, or local needle exchange.