



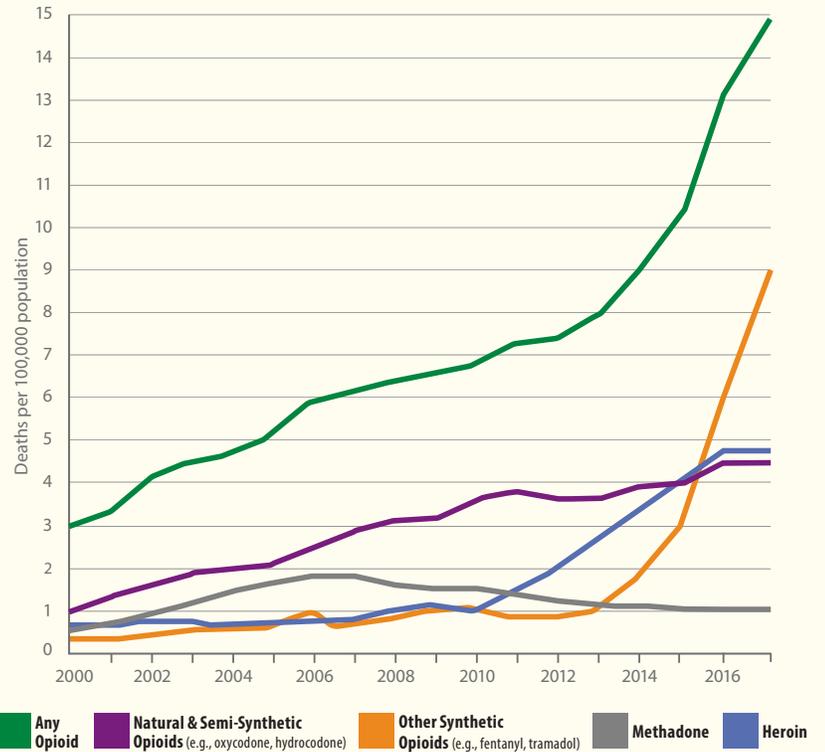
CDC's Efforts to Prevent Opioid Overdoses

AND OTHER OPIOID-RELATED HARMS

A Public Health Crisis

Drug overdoses have dramatically increased over the last two decades, with deaths more than tripling between 1999 and 2016. In 2017, more than 70,000 people died from drug overdoses, making it the leading cause of injury-related death in the United States. Of those deaths, about 68 percent involved a prescription or illicit opioid. Adults between the ages of 25 and 54 years old have the highest rates of overdose deaths.

Overdose Deaths Involving Opioids, United States, 2000-2017



SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality. CDC WONDER, Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2017. <https://wonder.cdc.gov/>.

In 2006, CDC initiated efforts to better track and understand data related to the growing epidemic. A scientist from CDC noticed an uptick in poisoning deaths and heard troubling news from state medical examiners about increases in drug overdose deaths. Prescription opioids were identified as the primary concern.

Since then, CDC has provided leadership by promoting a public health approach to the problem. CDC's funding for opioid-related activities has increased from \$0 in FY 2014 to an appropriation of \$475 million for opioid overdose prevention and surveillance activities in FY 2019. The majority of these funds go to the states for their prevention efforts.

In addition to this work, which is housed in CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, programs throughout CDC are working to prevent opioid overdoses and other opioid-related harms, including opioid use disorder, hepatitis and HIV infections, and neonatal abstinence syndrome.



CDC's Efforts to Prevent Opioid Overdoses AND OTHER OPIOID-RELATED HARMS



CDC's work focuses on five areas:



Conducting Surveillance & Research



Building State, Local, & Tribal Capacity



Supporting Providers, Health Systems, & Payers



Partnering with Public Safety



Empowering Consumers to Make Safe Choices



Conduct Surveillance and Research

Timely, high-quality data help public health officials and other decision-makers understand the extent of the problem, focus resources where they are needed most, and evaluate the success of prevention efforts. Recognizing the importance of data, CDC is helping states track the opioid overdose epidemic and better focus their prevention activities. In addition, CDC funds research to better understand the epidemic and identify effective strategies to prevent it.



Build State, Local, and Tribal Capacity

States, local communities, and tribes play an important role in preventing opioid overdoses and related harms. They run prescription drug monitoring programs, regulate controlled substances, license healthcare providers, respond to drug overdose outbreaks, and run large public insurance programs such as Medicaid and Workers' Compensation. CDC is nationally recognized for its work with health departments and community-based organizations. The agency has a long track record of funding efforts to improve data collection and implementing evidence-based prevention strategies.



Support Providers, Health Systems, and Payers

Providers and the health systems they work in are crucial in promoting safer and more effective opioid prescribing for pain management. Use of the CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain by providers and health systems can improve the way that opioids are prescribed. In addition, health systems can implement quality improvement measures informed by the guideline to track their efforts and integrate these measures into their electronic health records. Private and public insurers and pharmacy benefit plan managers can foster the implementation of CDC's guideline through improvements in coverage, removal of barriers, and drug utilization review.



Partner with Public Safety

In recent years, the opioid overdose epidemic has worsened with a rise in the use of illicit opioids. Of particular concern is illicitly manufactured fentanyl, which is 50–100 times more potent than morphine. CDC has forged new partnerships with law enforcement to address the growing illicit opioid problem. The agency has partnered in innovative ways with public safety and is a leader in prevention strategies in high intensity drug trafficking areas across 22 states. Greater communication and collaboration between public health and law enforcement can improve data sharing, surveillance, and the targeting of interventions.

First responders—including police, fire, and paramedics—are on the frontlines of the epidemic. They are often in a position to save lives with timely administration of naloxone. They may unknowingly come into contact with opioids, including illicitly manufactured fentanyl. CDC provides guidance for first responders who may be exposed to synthetic opioids when responding to medical calls or crime scenes, or during drug raids.



Empower Consumers to Make Safe Choices

One of CDC's priorities is raising awareness about the risks of prescription opioid misuse with consumers. To accomplish this, CDC launched the Rx Awareness communication campaign that features testimonials from people recovering from opioid use disorder and people who have lost loved ones to opioid overdose. The goal of the campaign is to educate consumers about the risks of prescription opioids and the importance of discussing safer and more effective pain management with their healthcare providers. CDC is also promoting awareness of risks associated with non-medical use of opioids, factors that increase risks (such as fentanyl in the local drug supply), and approaches to reduce risks.