Many teens first take opioids prescribed by a doctor for pain after a medical issue, such as a sports injury or wisdom tooth surgery. Studies show that most heroin users started out misusing common opioid medications such as oxycodone. Since 1999, the number of prescriptions written for opioids in the U.S. has tripled. Long-term opioid use often begins with treatment of acute pain, and the risks for chronic opioid use increase with each additional day supplied. The CDC recommends limiting opioid prescriptions to three days or less when prescribed for acute pain.

The key to overcoming opioid use disorder is finding the right treatment. Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) increases the odds for long-term recovery and reduces the likelihood of recurrence by easing symptoms of opioid withdrawal and reducing cravings. One of the most effective treatments for opioid use disorder, MAT combines FDA-approved medications with counseling. In the U.S., young adults age 18 to 25 are the most likely to engage in non-medical use of prescription drugs — including opioid pain relievers.

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