

What are opioids?

Opioids are highly addictive drugs used to reduce pain. They can be derived from natural sources, such as opium, or manufactured synthetically. Synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, are more potent, more addictive, and less expensive to produce than natural opioids. Because they are so inexpensive, synthetic opioids are often mixed with other drugs, such as methamphetamine, or pressed into counterfeit pills that resemble legitimate prescription medications, increasing the risk of overdose.

How has Utah been impacted by opioids?

In 2025, there were **380 overdoses** that involved any opioids. Fatal overdoses from prescription opioids continue to trend downward from 2023 (208), with **169 deaths in 2025**.

Dependency vs. Addiction

Dependency: The brain adapts to opioids and begins to rely on them.

Addiction: Compulsive use despite harm, often with increasing or unsafe use.

How common are synthetic opioids in Utah

In 2024, almost 92% of seized fentanyl samples submitted to the Utah Bureau of Forensic Services were in the form of counterfeit pills or tablets. Pills were most commonly found to appear similar to legitimately manufactured 30-milligram oxycodone as seen below.

Counterfeit pills look real

Counterfeit pills can closely resemble legitimate prescription medications.
You cannot tell the difference by looking.

LEGITIMATE OXYCODONE 30 MG	COUNTERFEIT OXYCODONE 30 MG
	
 Pharmaceutical-grade oxycodone. Prescribed by a healthcare professional.	 Counterfeit pills may contain FENTANYL or other dangerous substances.

**Counterfeit pills are a leading driver of overdose deaths.**
Protect yourself. Don't use medicine that was not prescribed to you.

Circumstances around opioid overdose in Utah, 2020-2024.

The **percentage of fatal overdoses with illegally made fentanyl** grew from 21% to 38%.

The proportion of fatal overdoses with the reported **presence of counterfeit pills** made to look like prescription drugs increased from 6% to 14%.

Who was most at risk from illegal opioids in 2024?

- **Men** consisted of **65%** of fatal overdoses that involved counterfeit pills.
- **38%** of fatal overdoses that involved counterfeit pills were among those aged **34-44 years old**.

How do I know if it's an opioid overdose and what should I do?

Overdose signs, symptoms, and how you can help.



Small, pinpoint pupils.



Blue/purple fingernails and lips.



Won't wake up, limp body.



Shallow or stopped breathing.



Faint heartbeat.



Gurgling, choking noise.

- If given quickly naloxone can reverse an opioid overdose (including fentanyl, heroin, and prescription opioids).
- It has no abuse potential, few side effects, and only works on opioids.
- It typically works within 5 minutes, may require additional doses every 2–5 minutes, and lasts 30–90 minutes.

Learn how to [use naloxone](#) and [find](#) free or low-cost options through Utah's naloxone training and distribution resources.

5 steps to save a life:

1. **Wake** the person. **Shake** shoulder. **Shout** their name.
2. **Administer** naloxone.
3. **Call** 911.
4. **Rescue breathing** clear airway, tilt chin up, pinch nose, one breath every 5 seconds for 2 minutes.
5. **Repeat and recover.** If not waking up after 2 minutes, repeat steps 3 and 4. Place the person in the **recovery position** (move the person onto their side, with their knees bent, and make sure they can breathe) if you have to leave.



How to Help

Take opioids only as prescribed and stop when they are no longer needed.



Never share prescription opioids.



Safely dispose of unused medications at a secure drop box.



Carry naloxone and know how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose.

STOP THE OPIDEMIC

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