

# OPIOIDS IN RURAL FARMING COMMUNITIES

## The opioid crisis is having an impact on rural communities.

Opioid misuse, addiction and overdose have become serious public health issues. While all areas of the country have been affected by this crisis, rates of drug-related deaths in rural areas have surpassed those in urban areas (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2017a).

- 115 Americans die every day from opioid overdose (CDC, 2017b).
- Opioid misuse can begin accidentally with safe use of painkillers.
- Rural areas have higher rates of opioid prescriptions (Guy et al., 2017).

## How does the opioid crisis impact rural farming communities?

- 74% of farmers or farm workers are or have been impacted by opioid misuse.
  - 26% of farmers and farm workers have abused, been addicted or have taken an opioid without a prescription.
  - 77% of farmers or farm workers believe it would be easy to access opioid painkillers without a prescription.
- (Morning Consult, 2017).

## What drugs are opioids?

Opioid drugs block pain signals in the body and are usually used to treat moderate to severe pain.

Some examples of opioids that can be prescribed by a doctor include oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet), hydrocodone (Vicodin, Lortab, Lorcet, Norco), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), meperidine (Demerol), oxymorphone (Opana), fentanyl, morphine, codeine, tramadol and others.

## What is opioid misuse?

- Taking an opioid medication prescribed by your doctor but in higher quantities or frequencies
- Taking an opioid medication prescribed by your doctor for a time period longer than indicated
- Taking an opioid medication prescribed by someone else's doctor
- Using an opioid to feel a high

## What can I do to help my community?

- Store medications for you, your family and your farm animals safely by locking them up.
- Do not share prescription medications.
- Take unused medications to prescription drop-off points.
- Learn to recognize signs and symptoms of opioid misuse.
- Educate others in your community about the impact of opioids.
- Be an ambassador for reducing stigma.



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## What are signs and symptoms of opioid misuse?

- Slurred speech
- Constricted pupils
- Runny nose or nose sores
- Sweaty, clammy skin
- Moving slower than usual
- Unable to move in a coordinated way
- Lack of awareness or inattention to people and/or things around them
- Being sedated or acting drowsy
- Feeling unusually happy, excited or “high”
- Problems with attention and memory
- Feeling sad or losing interest in activities one normally enjoys
- Less sensitive to pain
- Feeling hopeless
- Confusion
- Constipation

## REFERENCES

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