

OPIOID TREATMENT

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids are a class of drug which include morphine, pethidine, codeine, oxycodone, methadone, buprenorphine, opium, and heroin. In medical settings opioids are used for pain relief and can bring on feelings of well being. They act as a depressant on the central nervous system which means they slow down functions in the brain and body. Opioids can also cause coma and death in high doses.

WHAT IS OPIOID DEPENDENCE?

When opioids are used regularly, over time physical and psychological dependence can develop. Physical dependence means that the body adapts to using the substance and eventually opioids are needed for normal day to day functioning. Tolerance also occurs and more of the drug is required to get the same effect. Stopping or cutting down causes the body to go in to withdrawal, and is extremely unpleasant. Psychologically, thoughts and emotions begin to revolve around the drug; there will be strong urges to continue to use the drug (cravings) which persist despite knowing that ongoing use is causing problems.

WHAT IS OPIOID REPLACEMENT TREATMENT?

When a person is dependant on an opioid drug, opioid replacement treatment may be recommended. Opioid replacement treatment, sometimes called substitution treatment or maintenance treatment, is where opioid agonist, partial agonist or antagonist medicines are used to control a person's drug use on a long term basis. This occurs in combination with psychological support. By replacing the use of illicit opioids (like heroin) with a long acting, oral opioid (like methadone) people are able to avoid intense cravings and withdrawal, and focus on other areas of life.

TYPES OF OPIOID REPLACEMENT TREATMENT?

Agonist

mimics the effects of opioids
methadone

Partial Agonist

partially blocks the effects of opioids
buprenorphine / suboxone

Antagonist

blocks the effects of opioids
naltrexone / naloxone

To find further information on ORT clinics and providers:
Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
Ph: 1800 177 833.

Useful links for information

Alcohol Tobacco and other Drugs - www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/topics
Drug Info - www.druginfo.adf.org.au

Dovetail
supporting the youth alcohol
and drug sector in Queensland
www.dovetail.org.au