



# The Facts About Opioid Use Disorder

Over 2 Million Americans Struggle with Opioid Use Disorder Every Day

## What Is Opioid Use Disorder?

Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) is also known as opioid or heroin addiction. It's a chronic disease, similar to diabetes or heart disease, that changes the way the brain functions. Once it takes over, the brain chemistry is altered, making it hard to control urges and stop using.

***One out of every four people who tried heroin for the first time struggle to quit.***

Opioids, such as heroin, fentanyl, or oxycodone, are incredibly addictive and can quickly take over someone's life. The likelihood of developing OUD depends on several complex factors, such as genetics, environment, and history of trauma.

***ANYONE can develop an OUD regardless of their drug use history, genetics, race, ethnicity, age, gender or personality type.***

## What Are the Signs of OUD?

Opioids don't just change the brain. They also impact every aspect of the dependent person's life. These changes may be hard to notice at first. But over time, they build up and spiral out of control.

## Common signs of an OUD include:



Repeated attempts or desires to reduce use without success



Increased opioid cravings (of any kind)



Experiencing withdrawal symptoms like headaches, nausea, or general discomfort when an opioid is stopped



Continuing to use even when it causes problems at home, work, or in relationships



Behavioral signs such as changes in personality, avoiding family or friends, a drop in job performance, secretive behavior, or increased moodiness and/or irritability



## How Does OUD Develop?

When opioids are consumed over time, the brain gradually builds a tolerance to the drugs. After tolerance increases, higher doses are required to feel the same effect, or the brain will trigger withdrawal symptoms. Over time, one will not be able to stop without feeling in withdrawal. Opioids “hijack” the brain’s reward system and alter it to crave even more drugs.

***OUD doesn't develop because a person is weak-willed. It's a disease that changes the way their brain functions.***

## Can OUD Be treated?

Yes! Although every recovery journey is different, there are flexible treatment plans available for you or your loved one.

**Find out more about Medication-Assisted Recovery at [www.rethinkrecoveryil.com](http://www.rethinkrecoveryil.com)**

# Common Myths About OUD

## Myth #1: Using opioids is a choice and a moral failing.

**Fact:** OUD isn't a personal failing. It's a health condition that changes the way the brain functions. Once opioids like heroin take over, the brain chemistry is altered, making it hard to control urges. Use of opioids grows into an obsession that may become more important than other aspects of life. (source)

## Myth #2: People who can't quit cold turkey just need more discipline.

**Fact:** OUD isn't merely a choice. And recovery is more complicated than "just saying no." The person struggling to quit heroin deserves proper treatment and medication just like people with other diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease. (source)

## Myth #3: If they cared about their family, they would stop using heroin.

**Fact:** People struggling to quit heroin care a lot about their loved ones and understand that their drug use causes their family, friends, and community pain. But their disease prevents them from stopping, despite a deep desire to make amends with their loved ones. (source)

**If you or a loved one is struggling to quit heroin, you can connect to help in three easy ways:**



Call to speak with a specialist at 833-234-6343 / Text "HELP" to 833234  
Find a local Medication-Assisted Recovery health care provider at [www.rethinkrecoveryil.com](http://www.rethinkrecoveryil.com).



For more information and resources about how  
Medication-Assisted Recovery works, visit [RethinkRecoveryIL.com](http://RethinkRecoveryIL.com).

