



OPIOID AWARENESS GUIDE

Speak to a Cannabis Nurse for free 844-Leaf411



Welcome to Leaf411's guide to cannabis use for chronic pain written in conjunction with our education partner Radicle Health. This guide is intended to bring awareness to opioid use for chronic pain and how cannabinoids can offer a safe and effective option either in place of or in conjunction with opioids.

Chronic Pain and Opioids

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- Chronic pain **affects 20.4% of US adults** with 8% reporting high impact chronic pain.
- Chronic pain is more commonly found in **those who have poor socioeconomic status and public funded health care** ¹.
- Opioid abuse **can cause respiratory arrest, coma and death**.
- The amount of **deaths attributed to opioid overdoses has quadrupled** since 1999.
- Despite these numbers, opioid use continues to increase and in 2017, **an opioid crisis was declared a public health emergency** ².
- It is estimated that **more than 500,000 American's died between 2000-2015 from drug overdoses**.
- Today the CDC estimates that **91 Americans die daily from opioid overdoses** ².



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Facts about the opioid crisis from the National Institute on Drug Abuse ³

- Between **21-29%** of patients who have prescription opioids misuse them
- Around **8-12%** of chronic pain patients using opioids will develop opioid use disorder
- Roughly **4-6%** of those who misuse opioids will start using heroin
- Of those who use heroin, **8%** started with prescription opioids

Chronic Pain and Opioid Stats Cont...

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Types of Chronic Pain

- Cancer Pain
- Arthritic Pain
- Neuropathic Pain
- Headaches
- Post-surgical Pain
- Psychogenic Pain
- Post-Traumatic Pain

¹ Chronic or persistent pain can also lead to anxiety, depression, insomnia and chronic fatigue.

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Opioids for Chronic Pain

Should not be used for first line therapy. It is best to establish goals of care between patient and clinician first. **Start low and slow. Only use long acting opioids for chronic pain and not acute.** Reassess and reduce opioid use throughout the plan of care⁴.

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Opioid Concerns

Plenty of concerns surround opioids from potential misuse or abuse to potential for overdose. Dose tolerance increases over time, making these concerns even more likely. On top of that, synthetics run rampant and **synthetic opioids accounted for 73% of opioid deaths** ⁵



Cannabinoids for Chronic Pain



- The national Academy of Sciences stated that the research supports the use of **cannabis as an effective treatment of chronic pain in adults.**
- CBD can relieve pain and inflammation and **shift the dysphoria associated with pain.**
- THC can **reduce inflammation** and block some types of pain.
- Cannabinoids do not cause respiratory depression and **cannot lead to fatal overdose.**
- Studies suggest that **cannabinoids can be effective** in migraine, neuropathic pain, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis and inflammatory pain.

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Opioids and Cannabis for Chronic Pain



- Research suggests **cannabis and opioids relieve symptoms** better together and can reduce overall opioid intake.
- Research has linked **cannabis access to lower rates of opioid use, decreased hospitalizations and fewer deaths related to opioid use.**



THANK YOU!

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The Opioid Awareness Guide is brought to you by [Leaf411](#). We're encouraging those who enjoy this guide to [donate](#) to Leaf411. Every dollar counts and helps them grow, keeps the calls free, and pays a living wage to the cannabis-trained nurses who staff their hotline. Subscribe to the Leaf411 YouTube channel to stay up-to-date on cannabis information from their [Leaf Learning Series](#)! This guide is part of a series created by the [Cannabis Creative Movement](#), a joint effort fueled by [PufCreativ](#) and [The 9th Block](#) agencies.

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Resources

- Leaf411.org
- Radiclehealthcare.com
- Americans for Safe Access
- Healer.com
- Society of Cannabis Clinicians
- American Cannabis Nurses Association
- NORML.org

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6736a2.htm>

² <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/EPRO/Current-Emergencies/Ongoing-emergencies>

³ <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/opioids/opioid-overdose-crisis>

⁴ https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/prescribing/Guidelines_Factsheet-a.pdf

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/index.html>