

# Opioids

## Glossary

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Opioids are a class of drugs that act on the central nervous system to produce pain relief and sedative effects. They work by binding to opioid receptors in the brain and blocking pain signals from reaching the brain. In addition to relieving pain, opioids can also produce a sense of euphoria, leading to their potential for abuse and addiction. Long-term use of opioids can lead to tolerance and physical dependence.

The terms “opioids” and “opiates” are often used interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing. Opiates are drugs derived from opium poppy plants, such as codeine and morphine. Opioids, on the other hand, include both natural opiates and synthetic drugs that mimic the effects of opiates.

## Natural Opioids

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Natural opioids are derived from the opium poppy plant and include substances such as codeine, morphine, thebaine, papaverine, and noscapine.<sup>1</sup>


### Codeine


Codeine is an opioid alkaloid found in opium that acts on the central nervous system to reduce pain and induce sleep.<sup>2</sup> It is commonly used in cough syrups and other over-the-counter medications for mild to moderate pain relief.

Common street names for codeine include:

 Captain Cody

 Cody

 Schoolboy

 T-three's

 Lean

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse – Prescription Opioids DrugFacts

<sup>2</sup> National Library of Medicine – Codeine



## Morphine


Morphine is a powerful opioid alkaloid found in opium that acts directly on the central nervous system to relieve pain.<sup>3</sup> It is commonly used in hospitals for severe pain relief after surgery or injury. Common street names for morphine include

 Dreamer

 Emsel

 First Line

 Hows

 God's Drug

## Thebaine

Thebaine is an opioid alkaloid found in opium that acts on the central nervous system to reduce pain but does not induce sleep like other opioids do.<sup>4</sup> It can be used as a starting material for synthesizing other opioids such as oxycodone and hydrocodone.

## Synthetic Opioids

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Synthetic opioids are chemically manufactured compounds that mimic the effects of natural opioids but often have a higher potency. Some common synthetic opioids include fentanyl, oxycodone, methadone, and tramadol.

## Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine.<sup>5</sup> It is used to treat severe pain, particularly in cancer patients or those

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<sup>3</sup> [Department of Justice/Drug Enforcement Agency – Drug Fact Sheet: Morphine](#)

<sup>4</sup> [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – The Dependence Potential of Thebaine](#)

<sup>5</sup> [National Institute on Drug Abuse – Fentanyl DrugFacts](#)




undergoing surgery. Fentanyl interacts with the central nervous system by binding to opioid receptors, which results in pain relief and sedation. Common street names for fentanyl include:


 Apache

 China Girl

 China White


 Dance Fever

 Friend

 Goodfella

 Jackpot

 Murder 8

 Tango & Cash

## Heroin

Heroin is a semi-synthetic opioid derived from morphine.<sup>6</sup> It acts directly on the central nervous system to produce an intense euphoric high followed by drowsiness and pain relief. It is highly addictive and can be injected, smoked, or snorted. Common street names for heroin include:

 Smack

 Skag

 Junk

 Horse

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<sup>6</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse – Heroin DrugFacts




 Dragon

 China White

## Methadone

Methadone is a synthetic opioid used as a pain reliever and as part of drug addiction detoxification and maintenance programs, particularly for individuals addicted to heroin or other opioids.<sup>7</sup> Methadone works by interacting with the central nervous system and binding to opioid receptors, providing pain relief without producing the euphoric high associated with opioid abuse. Common street names for methadone include:

 Amidone

 Chocolate Chip Cookies

 Fizzies

 Maria

 Pastora

 Salvia

 Street Methadone

 Wafer

## Oxycodone

Oxycodone is a semi-synthetic opioid derived from thebaine, a natural opioid alkaloid found in opium.<sup>8</sup> It is used to treat moderate to severe pain and acts on the central nervous system by binding to opioid receptors. Common street names for oxycodone include:

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<sup>7</sup> Substance abuse and Mental Health Services Administration – Methadone


<sup>8</sup> Department of Justice/Drug Enforcement Administration – Drug Fact Sheet: Oxycodone



 Oxy

 O.C.

 Oxycet

 Oxycotton


 Hillbilly Heroin

 Kicker

## Tramadol

Tramadol is a synthetic opioid used to treat moderate to moderately severe pain.<sup>9</sup> It works by binding to opioid receptors in the central nervous system and inhibiting the re-uptake of serotonin and norepinephrine, which helps to reduce pain sensations. Common street names for tramadol include:

 Chill Pills

 O-Desmethyltramadol

 Trammies

 Ultra

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<sup>9</sup> [Mayo Clinic - Tramadol \(Oral Route\)](#)



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