



Oklahoma Center *for*
Poison & Drug Information

(800) 222-1222

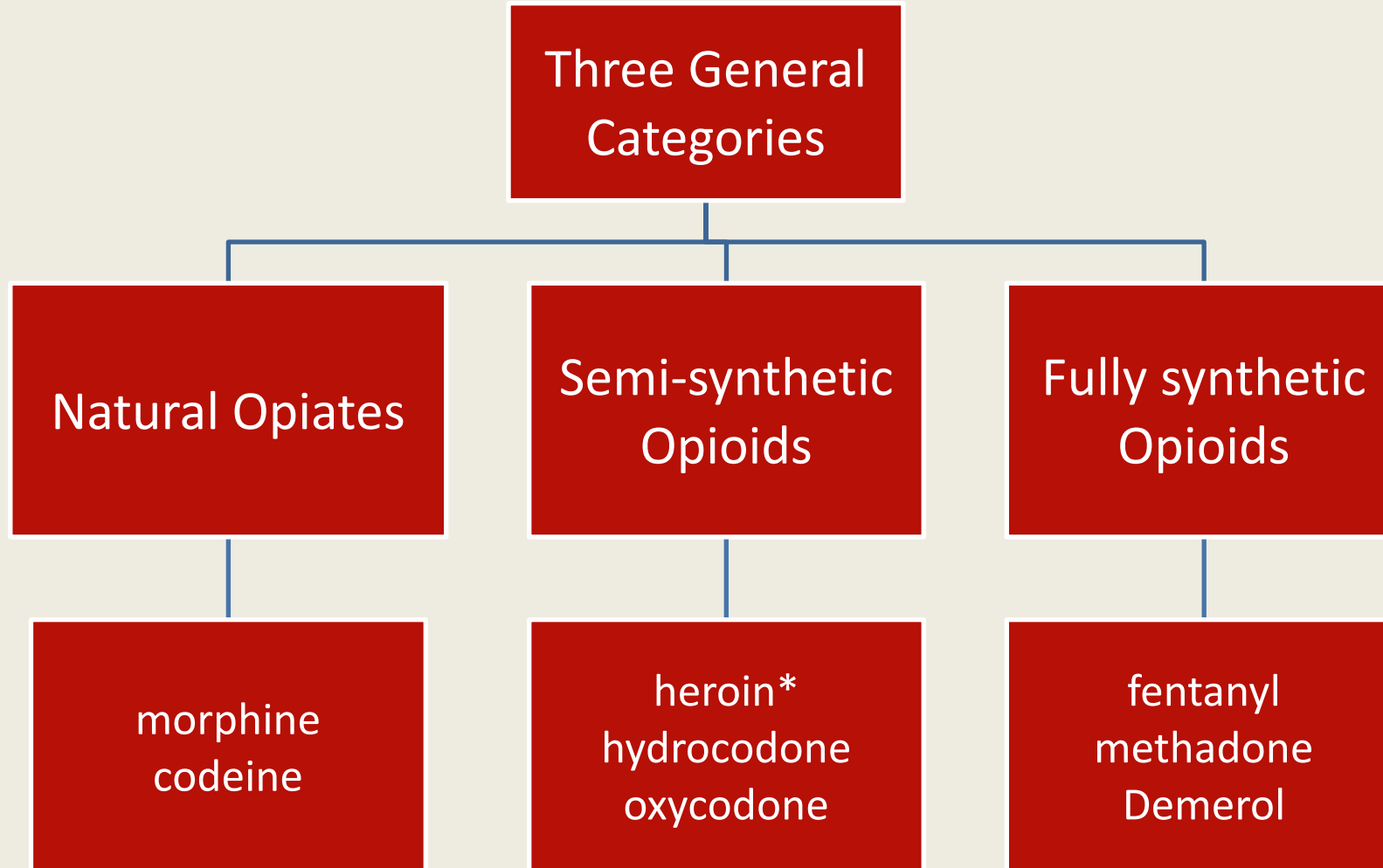
How do opiates work and why are they so addictive?

Opiate Basics



- An opiate is a chemical derived from opium.
- Opium is found naturally in the poppy plant, and contains alkaloids such as morphine and codeine.
- It is easily transformed into heroin.
- The pain medications often found in medicine cabinets (hydrocodone, oxycodone) are “opiate-like.”
 - They are man-made and often called opioids.

Opiate Basics





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What are opioids?

- Medication often prescribed for pain
- They also increase dopamine giving some people a high
 - Dopamine is a “feel good” chemical found naturally in the body.
- They can also slow down your breathing and are highly addictive



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Why are opioids so addictive?

- Your body can build up a tolerance
 - The more you use, the larger dose you need to get the same effect.
- You can become dependent on them:
 - Your body creates natural pain relievers that are released when you hurt yourself.
 - If you habitually use pain killers then your body stops producing its own natural opioids and relies on the drugs instead.

Why are opioids so addictive?

If you try and stop then your body goes through withdrawal.

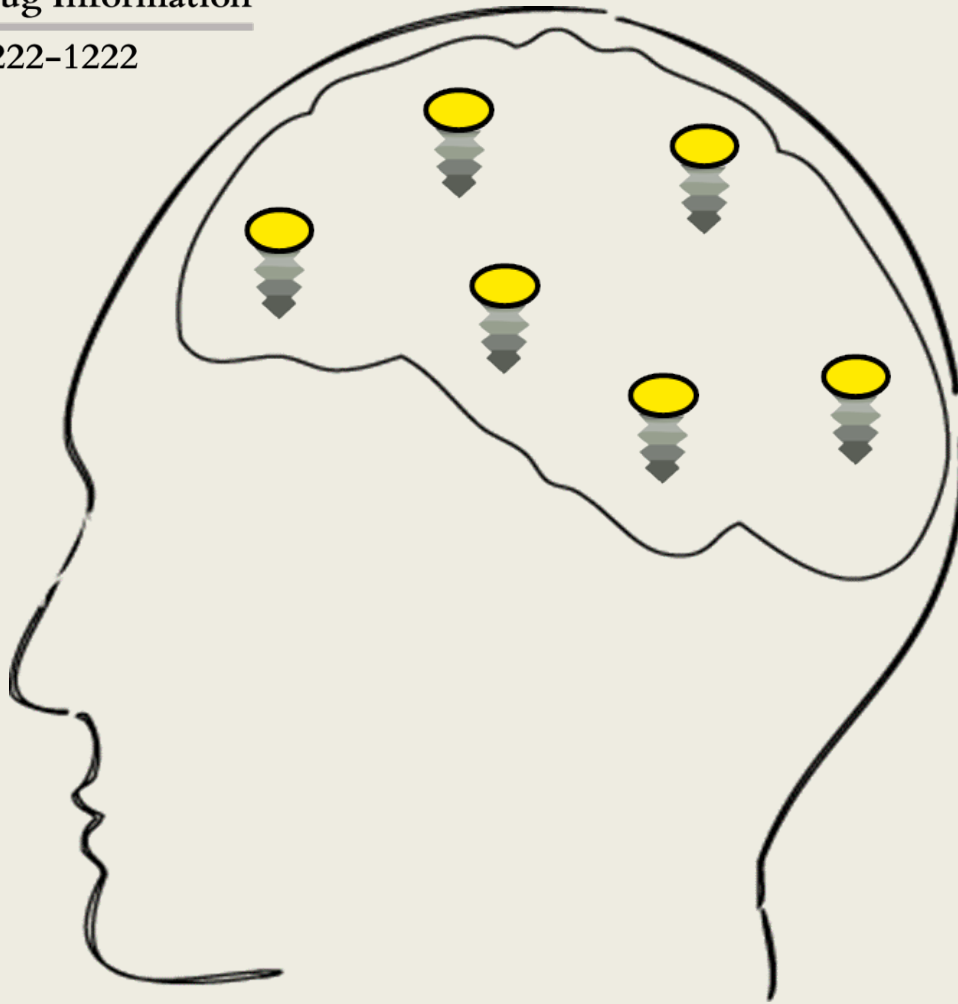
- Anxious
- Restless/Agitation
- Nausea/Vomiting/Diarrhea
- Muscle Pain
- Joint Pain
- Abdominal Pain
- Increased Heart Rate
- Mild Increase in Blood Pressure
- Sweating



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What is their effect on breathing?



- There are opiate receptors in the brain.
- Opiates and opioids are Central Nervous System (CNS) depressants.
- The CNS controls our ability to breathe.
- When depressed too far by CNS depressants, this function can slow down and eventually stop.



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Drug Interactions with Opioids

- Anything that also causes CNS depression
 - Alcohol
 - Benzodiazepines
 - Many anticonvulsants
 - Antihistamines
- Many drugs can enhance and lengthen the depressant effects of opioids
 - Some antidepressants, stomach acid meds





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Identify an Opioid Overdose

REALLY HIGH	OVERDOSE
Pupils pinpoint	Pupils pinpoint
Nodding, but arousable (responds to sternal rub)	Not arousable (no response to sternal rub)
Speech is slurred	Very infrequent, shallow breathing or no breathing
Sleepy, intoxicated, but breathing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 or more times per minute	Breathing slow or stopped <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less than 8 times per minute• May hear choking sounds or gurgling/snoring noises• Blue lips, blue fingertips
<i>Stimulate and observe</i>	<i>Rescue breathe + give naloxone</i>

Who Do I Contact for a Suspected Overdose?

- If the person is unconscious or not breathing, call 911 immediately
- The Poison Center has pharmacists and nurses available 24 hours a day to assist
- We will help decide whether or not the patient requires medical attention or can be monitored at home



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