



THE TRUTH ABOUT

PAINKILLERS

There is a lot of talk about drugs in the world—on the streets, at school, on the Internet and TV. Some of it is true, some not.

Much of what you hear about drugs actually comes from those selling them. Reformed drug dealers have confessed they would have said anything to get others to buy drugs.

Don't be fooled. You need facts to avoid becoming hooked on drugs and to help your friends stay off them.

Prescription PAINKILLERS

While the use of many street drugs is on a slight decline in the US, abuse of prescription drugs is growing. In 2007, 2.5 million Americans abused prescription drugs for the first time, compared to 2.1 million who used marijuana for the first time. Among teens, prescription drugs are the most

commonly used drugs next to marijuana, and almost half of the teens abusing prescription drugs are taking painkillers.

Why are so many young people turning to prescription drugs to get high? By survey, almost 50% of teens believe that taking prescription drugs is much safer than using illegal street drugs.

What is not known by most of these young people is the risk they are taking by consuming these highly potent and mind-altering drugs. Long-term use of painkillers can lead to dependence, even for people who are prescribed them to relieve a medical condition but eventually fall into the trap of abuse and addiction.

In some cases, the dangers of painkillers don't surface until it is too late. In 2007, for example, abuse of the painkiller Fentanyl killed more than 1,000 people. The drug was found to be 30 to 50 times more powerful than heroin.

What are PAINKILLERS?

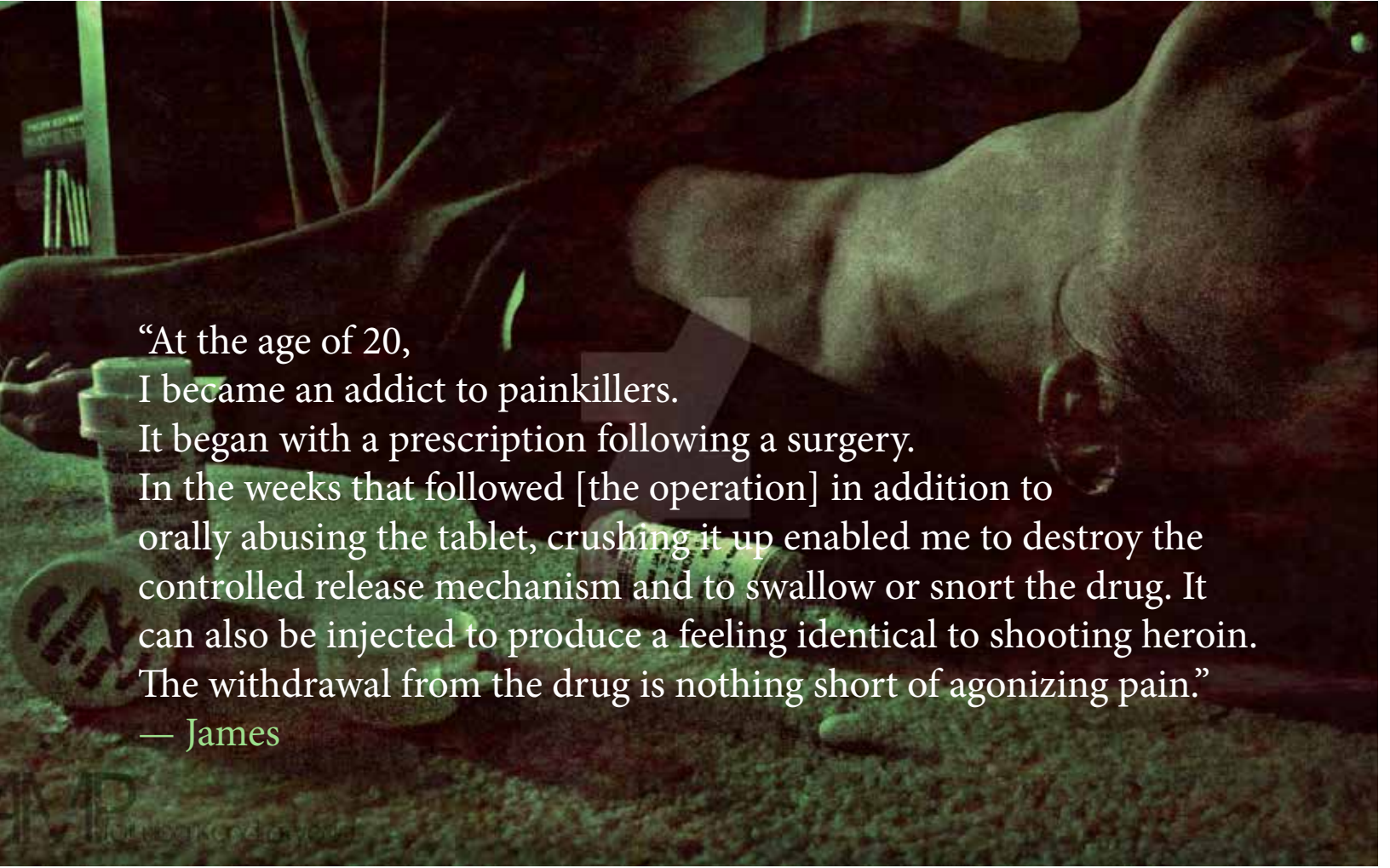
Prescription painkillers are powerful drugs that interfere with the nervous system's transmission of the nerve signals we perceive as pain. Most painkillers also stimulate portions of the brain associated with pleasure. Thus, in addition to blocking pain, they produce a "high."

The most powerful prescription painkillers are called opioids, which are opium-like* compounds. They are manufactured to react on the nervous system in the same way as drugs derived from the opium poppy, like heroin. The most commonly abused opioid painkillers include oxycodone, hydrocodone, meperidine, hydromorphone and propoxyphene.

Oxycodone has the greatest potential for abuse and the greatest dangers. It is as powerful as heroin and affects the nervous system the same way. Oxycodone is sold under many trade names, such as Percodan, Endodan, Roxiprin, Percocet, Endocet, Roxicet and OxyContin. It comes in tablet form.

Hydrocodone is used in combination with other chemicals and is available in prescription pain medications as tablets, capsules and syrups. Trade names include Anexsia, Dicodid, Hycodan, Hycomine, Lorcet, Lortab, Norco, Tussionex and Vicodin. Sales and production of this drug have increased significantly in recent years, as has its illicit use.

Meperidine (brand name Demerol) and hydromorphone (Dilaudid) come in tablets and propoxyphene (Darvon) in capsules, but all three have been known to be crushed and injected, snorted or smoked. Darvon, banned in the UK since 2005, is among the top ten drugs reported in drug abuse deaths in the US. Dilaudid, considered eight times more potent than morphine, is often called "drug store heroin" on the streets.



"At the age of 20,
I became an addict to painkillers.
It began with a prescription following a surgery.
In the weeks that followed [the operation] in addition to orally abusing the tablet, crushing it up enabled me to destroy the controlled release mechanism and to swallow or snort the drug. It can also be injected to produce a feeling identical to shooting heroin. The withdrawal from the drug is nothing short of agonizing pain."

— James



“I didn’t think I had a ‘drug’ problem—

I was buying the tablets at the drugstore. It didn’t affect my grades. I would feel a bit tired in the mornings, but nothing more. One day I took an overdose of about 40 tablets and found myself in the hospital. I spent 12 weeks in the clinic fighting my addiction.”

— Alex

Mental & Physiological Effects of Painkillers

- constipation
- nausea
- vomiting
- dizziness
- confusion
- unconsciousness
- respiratory depression
- increased risk of heart attack
- coma / death

PAINKILLER Dependency

Most commonly prescribed painkillers (OxyContin, Vicodin, Methadone, Darvocet, Lortab, Lorcet and Percocet), while offering relief from pain, can also cause your body to start “needing” the drug in order to feel just “normal.” Watch out for:

1. Usage increase: increase of one’s dose over time, as a result of growing tolerant to the drug and needing more to get the same effect.

2. Change in personality: shifts in energy, mood, and concentration and everyday responsibilities becoming secondary to the need for the drug.

3. Social withdrawal from family and friends.

4. Ongoing use: continued use of painkillers after the medical condition they were meant to relieve has improved.

5. Time spent on obtaining prescriptions: spending large amounts of time driving great distances and visiting multiple doctors to obtain the drugs.

6. Change in daily habits and appearance: decline in personal hygiene; change in sleeping and eating habits; constant cough, running nose and red, glazed eyes.

7. Neglects responsibilities: neglect of household chores and bills; calling in sick to school or work more often.

8. Increased sensitivity: normal sights, sounds and emotions becoming overly stimulating.

9. Blackouts and forgetfulness: forgetting events that have taken place.

10. Defensiveness: becoming defensive and lashing out in response to simple questions.