

The Pulse

Keeping a pulse on healthcare integration at RBH



In 2020, approximately 280 million people worldwide aged 15 to 64 years old reported having used an illicit drug in the past year. This is an increase of 26% since 2010. Each year a record number of deaths are reported due to misuse of opioids, often in combination with other drugs like benzodiazepines, stimulants, and alcohol. Between 2009 and 2021 there were 1,127 new psychoactive substance reported in 134 countries and territories. **According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2021 drug overdose deaths in the United States increase by 15%.** Two-thirds of those deaths involved synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl. **International Overdose Awareness Day is the world's largest annual campaign to end overdose.** It focuses on remembering those who have died due to overdose and acknowledging the grief of the families and friends left behind. Each year the International Overdose Awareness Day falls on August 31st. The physical and psychological signs of a drug overdose can vary depending on the type of drug(s) consumed, and whether the drug(s) were taken in combination with other substances. **All drugs can cause an overdose, including prescription medications if not taken exactly as prescribed by a physician.** Common signs and symptoms of a drug overdose include but are not limited to dilated pupils, chest pain, blue lips or fingers, vomiting, unsteady walking or unconsciousness. **If someone you know is experiencing a drug overdose seek medical attention immediately by calling 911.** For more information visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/index.html>.

A LOOK INSIDE THE AUGUST ISSUE:

RISK FACTORS FOR OPIOID OVERDOSE - PAGE 2
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OBAT - PAGE 3
ALIVE RVA WARMLINE- PAGE 4





RISK FACTORS FOR OPIOID OVERDOSE

Overdose occurs when a person's body has a severely harmful reaction to taking too much of a drug or a combination of different drugs.

It's possible to overdose on all types of drugs. But opioid overdoses are particularly dangerous. This is because they slow down a person's breathing.

It can be hard to know when a person is having an opioid overdose because they may seem to be sleeping. If a person is having an opioid overdose, their breathing slows to dangerous levels. This can cause brain damage and, in some cases, death.

Not everyone has the same risk of overdose. Different people will have different risks, depending on the type of opioid that they're taking, how long they've been taking it, their height and weight, and so on.

Key risk factors for opioid overdose are:

- dependence on opioids
- using high-dose (strong) opioids
- using opioids over the long term
- not sticking to the prescribed opioid dose or purpose
- using other drugs such as benzodiazepines, alcohol or other sedatives
- higher-risk practices like injecting
- using opioids again after stopping for a while
- chronic health conditions such as obesity or sleep apnea

IF YOU ARE USING ALCOHOL

Alcohol is a legal drug that's used by many people around the world. But alcohol is a depressant, which means it is dangerous to use with opioids.

All opioids, including those prescribed by a doctor, are dangerous to consume with alcohol.

Likewise, if you're taking opioids it's a good idea to avoid drinking alcohol. If you think you'll find it hard to stop drinking alcohol, discuss this with your doctor when they prescribe you opioids.

IF YOU ARE TAKING OTHER MEDICATIONS

Some medications may interact with opioids or increase the risk of overdose. It's important that your doctor is aware of any other medication you are taking when they prescribe you opioids.

If you've been prescribed a new medication – particularly a sedative such as benzodiazepines or other analgesics – make sure you inform the prescribing doctor that you're also taking an opioid medication.

Using opioids with prescribed medications like benzodiazepines, other opioids and other sedatives is especially risky. Opioids slow down your breathing and, when these are combined with other sedatives, this effect is increased. Using multiple sedatives at the same time puts you at significant risk of overdose and can lead to brain injury and death.

W h a t y o u n e e d
t o k n o w a b o u t

O B A T

- *OBAT stands for the Office-Based Addiction Treatment.*
- *The RICH Recovery Clinic provides treatment services for individuals diagnosed with Opioid Use Disorder.*
- *Participants must be a RBHA client and participate regularly in weekly counseling sessions.*
- *It provides Medication Assisted Treatment in order to assist clients in abstaining from the use of opiates.*
- *Over 240 RICH Recovery Clinic clients receive services from the OBAT program.*
- *Must submit a referral to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) services to be admitted in the OBAT program.*

1-833-4PEERVA

(1-833-473-3782)

www.AliveRVA.org

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**Peer Recovery
Warm Line**

*Listening and
Recovery Support*

*Treatment,
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Health Resources*

*You don't have to
face this alone.*

Call us.

**OPEN DURING
HOLIDAYS**

We encourage those
struggling with
addiction, their loved
ones & community
members to reach out.



Alive RVA Warm Line

8:00 am—12:00 midnight

7 days/week

**Talk to trained individuals with lived experience in
addiction recovery. Safe and confidential.**

We're here to help.

Alive RVA Project Partners:

Substance Abuse & Addiction Recovery Alliance (SAARA);

Mental Health America of Virginia;

Richmond Behavioral Health Authority.

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