



Role of a Dental Hygienist

- Educate patient about the side effects of opioids on oral health.
- Teach the patient the importance of home care.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of opioid abuse
- Learn how to reverse an opioid overdose with Narcan or Evzio.

References:

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Pictures:

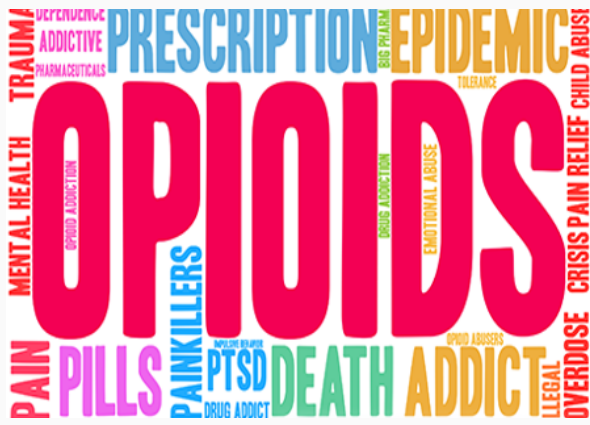
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- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/opioids/what-are-opioids.html>
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Opioids and its Effects on Oral Health



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What are opioids?

- Opioids are medication prescribed for pain relief
- Natural opioids such as opiates are made from opium poppy plants.
- Synthetic opioids are man-made chemical compounds



Types of Opioids:

- Codeine
- Fentanyl
- Heroin
- Hydrocodone
- Morphine
- Opiates
- Oxycodone

How do Opioids affect the Oral Health?

Opioid abuse can lead to many side effects throughout the whole body. Oral side effects include the following:

- Salivary Hypofunction, a dry or burning mouth which could lead to caries.
- Taste impairment
- Eating difficulties

This is because saliva plays an important role in the self-cleansing of the mouth as it washes away food and debris from the teeth and gums. Saliva helps moisten and break down food in order to make it easier to swallow. It also enhances taste.

- Candidiasis

Opioids are said to suppress peritoneal macrophage phagocytosis of candida albicans. Macrophages are large phagocytic cells found in the tissues of the body as a mobile white blood cell at sites of infection which help fight infection and help with the removal of that which is not specific to the healthy of the body.

- Mucosal dysplasia, dysplasia can be defined by the abnormal growth or development of a tissue or organ.
- Bruxism, defined as the grinding of the teeth which causes attrition.

Opioid abuse can also make a person more susceptible to oral diseases by making them more prone to neglect their oral health.

Are over prescription of Opioids leading to a rise in addiction?

- Opioids can easily be addictive as it contains receptors which act upon the peptides of the endorphins, secreting within the brain and nervous system and activate the body's neurotransmitters such as dopamine to give the body a sense of pleasure and reward.
- In 2017, there were 58 opioid prescriptions written for every 100 Americans with a daily dosage of 45.3MME.
- 46 people die every day from prescription opioid overdose.
- Opioids are becoming an epidemic problem. This is because poppy plants are easy to obtain as prescriptions such as Oxycodone, Hydrocodone and are easy to grow in comparison to other drugs.

