

Opioids and Dentistry

Abuse of prescription opioids continues to be a national epidemic and public health issue. Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the United States.¹

Opioid pain relievers are commonly prescribed following surgery or injury, or for health conditions such as cancer or for pain conditions such as toothache and pain associated with an abscess. While opioids can be effective treatment for managing chronic pain and other conditions when properly administered, they carry significant risk when misused or abused. Regular monitoring and identification of early risk factors is critical to recognizing patients who are most at-risk for prescription drug abuse issues and those who are in need of treatment.

Commitment across the healthcare industry is needed to effectively fight prescription opioid abuse.



What you can do:

Dentists have a significant role in ensuring appropriate prescription opioids use. Dental providers are the leading prescribers of opioids for teenagers. The largest increase in dental prescriptions from 2010 to 2015 occurred in 11- to 18-year-olds².

The American Dental Association has adopted two statements addressing opioid prescribing: **Statement on the Use of Opioids in the Treatment of Dental Pain³** and **Statement on Provision of Dental Treatment for Patients with Substance Use Disorders⁴**. These statements outline opioid management considerations including the importance of:

- Registering with and utilizing prescription drug monitoring program
- Discussions with patients regarding their responsibilities for preventing misuse, abuse, storage and disposal of prescription opioids
- Consideration of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory analgesics as the first-line therapy for acute pain management.
- Consideration of coordination with other treating doctors, including pain specialists when prescribing opioids for management of chronic orofacial pain.
- Encouragement to seek consultation with the patient's physician, when the patient has a history of alcoholism or other substance use disorder.

1. American Society of Addiction Medicine website. Opioid Addiction 2016 Facts & Figures (Available at: asam.org.) (Accessed November 2016)

2. Journal of the American Dental Association. Opioid prescribing practices from 2010 through 2015 among dentists in the United States. Available at [http://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177\(18\)30009-6/fulltext](http://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177(18)30009-6/fulltext) (Accessed April 2018)

3. American Dental Association. Statement on the use of opioids in the treatment of dental pain. Available at: <http://www.ada.org/en/about-the-ada/ada-positions-policies-and-statements/statement-on-opioids-dental-pain> (Accessed March 2017)

4. American Dental Association. Statement on Provision of Dental Treatment for Patients with Substance Use Disorders. (Available at: <http://www.ada.org/en/about-the-ada/ada-positions-policies-and-statements/provision-of-dental-treatment-for-patients-with-substance-abuse>) (Accessed March 2017)