

OPIOIDS AND TENNESSEE'S OLDER ADULTS

1 in 4 older adults use psychoactive medications with abuse potential.¹

Things to Know

Tennessee drug overdose deaths continue to rise, with overdoses involving opioids the leading responsible substance. Opioid addiction in Tennessee is also the source of other health and social issues such as an increased prevalence of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), number of children in foster care, and increases in other forms of addiction.

The impacts of opioid addiction on seniors is significant, including:

- Older adults taking opioids are 4 to 5 times more likely to fall than those taking other pain relievers.²
- For older adults, opioid misuse poses an increased risk for respiratory depression, confusion, falls, toxicity and overdose.³
- Prescription opioid misuse by older adults has increased the prevalence of suicidal thoughts.⁴
- The rise in elder abuse is thought to be tied to the opioid epidemic, including physical mistreatment, emotional abuse and financial exploitation by family members abusing opioids.⁵
- Parental substance misuse is the most common reason that an estimated 2.5 million children are raised by grandparents and other relatives. This can lead to increase financial, social, and physical problems.³

PREVENTION & RESPONSE

1. Know your options for managing pain, create a plan, and follow prescription directions. (ShatterProof.org)
2. Learn to recognize the signs of addiction. (University of Michigan, Health Blog)
3. Find a place to safely dispose of unused medications. (CountItLockItDropIt.org)
4. Seek local help for mental health and substance abuse disorder. (TAADAS.org)
5. Learn more about opioid addiction in Tennessee (TNTogether.com)

Sources:

1. Henderson, AW, Davita M, et al. Prescription opioid use and misuse among older adult Rhode Island Hospital emergency department patients. Rhode Island Medical Journal, March 2015, 28-31.
2. Krebs E, Paudel M, Taylor B et al. Association of Opioids with Falls, Fractures, and Physical Performance among Older Men with Persistent Musculoskeletal Pain. JGIM. 2015; 31(5):463-9.
3. Older Americans Behavioral Health Technical Assistance Center. Older Americans Behavioral Health. Issue Brief 5: Prescription Medication Misuse and Abuse Among Older Adults, 2012. ([Link](#))
4. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Drug Use and Its Consequences Increase Among Middle-Aged and Older Adults. July 10, 2019. ([Link](#))
5. Aging Today. Rural Older Adults Hit Hard by Opioid Epidemic, Accessed 9/20/2019. ([Link](#))