

## OXYCODONE HYDROCHLORIDE (OXYCONTIN®)



### Street Names:

Oxycontin®, Tylox®, Percodan®, OCs, ox, oxy, 40 (a 40-milligram tablet), 80 (an 80-milligram tablet), Blue, Hillbilly heroin, Kicker, Oxycotton

### Introduction:

OxyContin, a trade name for the narcotic oxycodone hydrochloride, is a painkiller available in the United States only by prescription. OxyContin is legitimately prescribed for relief of moderate to severe pain resulting from injuries, bursitis, neuralgia, arthritis, and cancer. Individuals abuse OxyContin for the euphoric effect it produces--an effect similar to that associated with heroin use.

### What Does It Look Like?

OxyContin is available as a 10 milligram (mg), 20 mg, 40 mg, or 80 mg tablet. The tablets vary in color and size according to dosage. The tablets are imprinted with the letters OC on one side and the number of milligrams on the opposite side.

### Common places of origin:

OxyContin was developed and patented in 1996 by Purdue Pharma L.P. and was originally available in 10 milligram (mg), 20 mg, 40 mg, and 80 mg tablets. A 160 mg tablet became available in July 2000. By comparison, Percocet and Tylox contain 5 mg of oxycodone and Percodan-Demi contains just 2.25 mg. The strength, duration, and known dosage of OxyContin are the primary reasons the drug is attractive to both abusers and legitimate users.

### Virginia Oxycodone:

The illegal diversion, distribution, and abuse of oxycodone products, particularly OxyContin, appear to be concentrated most heavily in the East, according to respondents to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey 2000 and DEA reporting. OxyContin Tablet, commonly referred to as OxyContin, has become the oxycodone product of choice in Maine, Ohio, and West Virginia, and in portions of eastern Kentucky, Maryland, western Pennsylvania, and rural southwestern Virginia. The most widely used diversion technique at the street level is doctor shopping. Individuals, who may or may not have a legitimate ailment requiring a doctor's prescription for controlled substances, visit numerous doctors, sometimes in several states, to acquire large amounts of controlled substances they abuse or sell to others. This problem is pronounced in southwestern Virginia and southern West Virginia.

### Drug Information From:

*US Drug Force Administration (DEA) ([www.justice.gov/dea/pubs/abuse/index.htm](http://www.justice.gov/dea/pubs/abuse/index.htm))*

*The Partnership at Drugfree.org (<http://www.drugfree.org/drug-guide>)*

*Oxycodone Addiction Help ([www.oxycodoneaddictionhelp.com/](http://www.oxycodoneaddictionhelp.com/))*

## **How Is Oxycodone Abused?**

Oxycodone abuse has been a continuing problem in the U.S. since the early 1960s. Oxycodone is abused for its euphoric effects. It is equipotent to morphine in relieving abstinence symptoms from chronic opiate (heroin, morphine) administration.

For this reason, it is often used to alleviate or prevent the onset of opiate withdrawal by street users of heroin and methadone. The large amount of oxycodone (10 to 80 mg) present in controlled release formulations (OxyContin®) renders these products highly attractive to opioid abusers and doctor-shoppers. They are abused either as intact tablets or by crushing or chewing the tablet and then swallowing, snorting or injecting. Products containing oxycodone in combination with acetaminophen or aspirin are abused orally. Acetaminophen present in the combination products poses an additional risk of liver toxicity upon chronic abuse.

## **What are the Short Term Affects?**

The most serious risk associated with opioids, including OxyContin, is respiratory depression — slowed breathing. Common opioid side effects are constipation, nausea, sedation, dizziness, vomiting, headache, dry mouth, sweating, mood changes, flushing, loss of appetite, and weakness. Taking a large single dose of an opioid could cause severe respiratory depression — slowed or difficulty breathing that can lead to death.

## **What are the Long Term Affects?**

Chronic use of opioids can result in tolerance for the drugs, which means that users must take higher doses to achieve the same initial effects. Long-term use also can lead to physical dependence and addiction — the body adapts to the presence of the drug, and withdrawal symptoms occur if use is reduced or stopped. Taken exactly as prescribed, opioids can be used to manage pain effectively.

## **How Does Oxycodone Affect the Body?**

Oxycodone is a central nervous system depressant. Oxycodone's action appears to work through stimulating the opioid receptors found in the central nervous system that activate responses ranging from analgesia to respiratory depression to euphoria. People who take the drug repeatedly can develop a tolerance or resistance to the drug's effects. Thus, a cancer patient can take a dose of oxycodone on a regular basis that would be fatal in a person never exposed to oxycodone or another opioid. Most individuals who abuse oxycodone seek to gain the euphoric effects, mitigate pain, and avoid withdrawal symptoms associated with oxycodone or heroin abstinence.

## **What Treatment Options Exist?**

Rehab options do exist for oxycodone addiction. Depending on the severity of the addiction, a complete recovery can take place in as soon as two weeks, or as long as one year. Because of the painful withdrawal symptoms and high rate of relapse associated with oxycodone addiction, no recovery will be easy. The process will require constant support and consistent accountability.

Designated centers for the outpatient or residential treatment of oxycodone addiction exist, and have excellent track records for meaningful, successful recoveries. Both residential and outpatient facilities are equipped to provide detox services, and will monitor the patient throughout the process.

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Another common rehab method for opiate addicts is the use of manufactured medicines. Beginning one of these medication regimens means you will be able to stop taking opiates immediately. Depending on the process, your medication will gradually be stepped down to lower doses, and eventually you will take no medication. This method is beneficial because it is heavily monitored by a healthcare professional and you will be taking consistent dosages.

### **Legislation**

Oxycodone, including OxyContin, are Schedule II drugs under the Federal Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act. Federal sentencing guidelines for diverted Schedule II pharmaceuticals are determined by the total weight of the tablets, not strength. Similar drugs of lower strength like Percocet and Tylox may weigh more than OxyContin, thus distributing the same quantities may result in stiffer penalties than for distributing OxyContin.

### **Other Information Resources**

- To find publicly funded treatment facilities by State, visit [www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov).

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