

Opioid Use Disorder in Older Adults: Teaching & Learning Resources



This document provides additional instructor resources that complement the student learning module.

Screening Tools

Listed below are links to tools commonly used to assess for opioid use disorder and opiate withdrawal.

- [Opioid Risk Tool \(ORT\)](#): A simple-to-use, short, and validated tool used with adult patients in primary care settings to evaluate the risk of opioid abuse in patients prescribed opioids for treatment of chronic pain.
- [Prescription Opioid Misuse Index](#): A 6-question, self-report survey, this tool is used to predict a patient's risk of OUD. The tool has not been validated. It requires more training to use successfully.
- [Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale \(COWS\)](#) is an 11-item assessment administered by providers in both inpatient and outpatient settings to assess signs of opiate withdrawal and determine the extent of the patient's dependence on opioids. However, the COWS scale contains items that can be difficult to pinpoint as OUD-related in older patients for whom they may actually be signs of dementia. Some of the criteria (such as resting pulse rate, restlessness, and GI upset) might be caused by side effects from medications or behavioral issues that can be common to older adults.

Patient Resources

Instructors may want to direct students towards the following patient resources.

- Narcotics Anonymous virtual meetings: https://www.na.org/?ID=virtual_meetings
- Narcotics Anonymous online or telephone meetings: <https://virtual-na.org/>
- Alcoholics Anonymous online group meetings: <https://www.onlinegroupaa.org/>
- The Addiction Recovery Guide chat rooms for support: https://www.addictionrecoveryguide.org/resources/online_communications/chat_rooms
- Find treatment by calling SAMHSA's National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP or going to [SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#)

Articles

Instructors may want to assign one or more of these current readings to augment their lessons.

- Dufort, A., & Samaan, Z. (2021). Problematic opioid use among older adults: Epidemiology, adverse outcomes and treatment considerations. *Drugs & Aging*, 38(12), 1043-1053. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40266-021-00893-z>

- Volkow, N. D., & McLellan, A. T. (2016). Opioid abuse in chronic pain – Misconceptions and mitigation strategies. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 374(13), 1253-1263. <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmra1507771>
- Degenhardt, L., Charlson, F., Mathers, B., Hall, W. D., Flaxman, A. D., Johns, N., & Vos, T. (2014). The global epidemiology and burden of opioid dependence: Results from the global burden of disease 2010 study. *Addiction*, 109(8), 1320-1333. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.12551>
- Ducharme, J., & Moore, S. (2019). Opioid use disorder assessment tools and drug screening. *Missouri Medicine*, 116(4), 318-324.
- Dufort, A., & Samaan, Z. (2021). Problematic opioid use among older adults: Epidemiology, adverse outcomes and treatment considerations. *Drugs & Aging*, 38(12), 1043-1053. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40266-021-00893-z>
- Duggirala, R., Khushalani, S., Palmer, T., Brandt, N., & Desai, A. (2022). Screening for and management of opioid use disorder in older adults in primary care. *Clinics in Geriatric Medicine*, 38(1), 23-38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cger.2021.07.001>
- Dydyk, A. M., Jain, N. K., & Gupta, M. (2022). Opioid use disorder. StatPearls. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK553166/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). Results from the 2013 national survey on drug use and health: Summary of national findings. NSDUH series H-48. Rockville, MD. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUHresultsPDFWHTML2013/Web/NSDUHresults2013.pdf>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2020). Treating substance use disorder in older adults: Treatment improvement protocol TIP 26. Retrieved from https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/SAMHSA_Digital_Download/PEP20-02-01-011%20PDF%20508c.pdf
- Rudd, R. A., Seth, P., David, F., & Scholl, L. (2016). Increases in drug and opioid-involved overdose deaths – United States, 2010-2015. *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 65(50-51), 1445-1452. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm655051e1>
- Volkow, N. D., & McLellan, A. T. (2016). Opioid abuse in chronic pain – Misconceptions and mitigation strategies. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 374(13), 1253-1263. <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmra1507771>
- Zullo AR, Danko KJ, Moyo P, Adam GP, Riester M, Kimmel HJ, Panagiotou OA, Beaudoin FL, Carr D, Balk EM. Prevention, Diagnosis, and Management of Opioids, Opioid Misuse, and Opioid Use Disorder in Older Adults. Technical Brief No. 37. (Prepared by the Brown Evidence-based Practice Center under Contract No. 290-2015-00002-I.) AHRQ Publication No. 21-EHC005. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. November 2020. Posted final reports are located on the [Effective Health Care Program search page](#). DOI: [10.23970/AHRQEPCTB37](https://doi.org/10.23970/AHRQEPCTB37).

Didn't find what you were looking for?

Search the [Age Friendly Care and Education Collection](#) for other educational resources on this topic.