Join the fight. Everyone plays a part in combating this epidemic.

What are opioids?

Opioids are a class of drugs designed to relieve pain. They can include natural derivatives of opium, such as morphine, and synthetic versions like fentanyl. Heroin is also an opioid. These drugs were originally designed for end-of-life pain. They have since been expanded to treat short-term pain from injury or surgery and chronic pain.

The Path to Addiction

All opioids can be addictive, but very short-term use is considered relatively safe. However, after time a patient develops a tolerance for opioids, requiring more of the drug to achieve the same effect. Once someone is addicted, they face difficult withdrawal symptoms if they don’t have the drug. Many people with heroin addiction turned to the illegal drug when they were unable to obtain the pain pills that started their addiction. All opioids can suppress breathing, leading to sudden death.

The Problem is More than Deaths

For every opioid overdose death...

15 abuse treatment admissions
26 emergency room visits
115 who abuse/are dependent
733 nonmedical users

In 2016, the Shasta County opioid overdose death rate was 8.3 (per 100,000 residents) compared to 4.6 for the state.

What can you do?

Talk to your children about the dangers of prescription and over-the-counter medicines. They aren’t any safer than “street drugs.”

Ask your doctor for alternatives to an opioid prescription. Make an opioid the last resort to manage pain.


Monitor: Know what prescriptions you have, and where they are. Try keeping track of prescriptions on a log sheet.

Secure: Keep your prescriptions out of common areas of your home. Prescriptions should be out-of-sight to visitors. Better yet, consider a lockbox for medications.

Dispose: Clear out your medicine cabinet and get rid of unused and unneeded medications.

Free and safe medication disposal locations:

Redding Police: 855 Cypress Ave., Redding
Anderson Police: 2220 North St., Anderson
Shasta Lake Sheriff’s Office, 4488 Red Bluff St.
Shasta County Sheriff’s Office, 20509 Shasta St., Burney

11/2017