

Tips to Talk about Opioids

Millions of people across the country are impacted by opioids and the opioid crisis. Mental health and substance use disorders like opioid misuse are real health conditions, and the words we use to talk about them make a big impact. Here are some tips to talk about opioids and to reduce stigma.

When Talking to or about Someone At-Risk:

- Avoid judgmental language
 - Addict
 - Addiction
 - Abuse
 - Clean or dirty
- Use the acronym **REAL**:
 - Remain calm
 - Engage with a caring tone
 - Ask open-ended questions
 - Listen nonjudgmentally



When Talking to Healthcare Providers:

- **Engage in shared decision-making:** When patients and healthcare providers come to an understanding about patient choice and treatment options, as well as patient and provider treatment preferences. It is important for patients and healthcare providers to make informed treatment decisions together.

Shared decision-making steps:

1. State what you think you need.
2. Be open.
3. Ask questions.
4. Have a plan.

Suggested questions to ask:

1. What are my options to help manage my symptoms?
2. What side effects or warning signs do I need to know about this medication?
3. How can I reduce any side effects?
4. Are there any risks of dependence with this medication?
5. How can I stay safe while taking this medication?
6. How long should I take this medication?
7. What happens if I still feel experience symptoms with this treatment plan?



To learn more and to see scenario examples, check out Purdue Extension's Opioid Education Series videos, available at www.extension.purdue.edu/opioids.