

# Opioid Use in the Workplace

Pain from work-related injuries, including from jobs that are heavy or strenuous in nature, can lead to opioid misuse or abuse.

According to the SAMHSA, in 2019, 9.7 million people aged 12 or older self-reported that they had personally misused prescription opioids during the previous year, and 65.7% said it was to relieve physical pain.<sup>1</sup>



## Cost of Opioid Abuse in the Workplace

**75%**

of employers report having been affected in some way by employee opioid use.<sup>2</sup>

**38%**

of those employers report experiencing impacts related to absenteeism or impaired worker performance.<sup>2</sup>

## Did You Know?

- Employees with a substance use disorder miss an average of 14.8 days while those with a pain medication use disorder miss an average of 29 days per year<sup>3</sup>
- **43%** of drug overdose deaths at work occurred in three industries: transportation and warehousing, construction, and healthcare and social assistance.<sup>4</sup>
- Musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions make up **34%** of the lost work time cases in manufacturing and **77%** in construction. MSK injuries are also linked with use of prescription pain medication.<sup>5</sup>

## Signs and symptoms:

- Drowsiness
- Fatigue
- Impaired focus and concentration
- Nausea and vomiting
- Lethargy

These symptoms can put employees at risk for accidents, impact ability to complete safety-sensitive tasks, and increase incidence of workers compensation claims.

## How Employers Can Help!



Assessing for occupational risk to reduce or prevent injury.



Permitting flexible start physical therapy, etc. times to allow medications to reach therapeutic dose prior to work.



Allowing job modifications to avoid exacerbation of existing injuries.



Providing information regarding alternative pain management resources, such as EAP, wellness initiatives, cognitive behavior therapy, physical therapy, etc.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29393/2019NSDUHFFRPDFWHTML/2019NSDUHFFRIPDFW090120.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Gopelrud E., Hodge S, Benham T.A Substance Use Cost Calculator for US Employers With and Emphasis on Prescription Pain Medication Misuse. Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. 2017;59(11):1063-1071. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5671784/>

<sup>3</sup>Iesman HM, Konda S, Cimineri L, et al. Drug overdose deaths at work, 2011-2016. Injury Prevention Published Online First: 10 April 2019. Doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2018-043104

<sup>4</sup>[https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/public/hasL\\_get\\_blob.cfm?ID=11582](https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/public/hasL_get_blob.cfm?ID=11582)

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