



## **Cancer Patients, Pregnant Women More Vulnerable to Opioid Addiction**

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While anyone who is taking prescription opioids to manage pain is at risk of opioid addiction, there are certain groups of people who are even more vulnerable to it. Cancer patients and pregnant women, for example, are more often exposed to these medications.

This is made more concerning by the fact that deaths from addiction driven by the opioid crisis increased nearly 10 percent in 2017 according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). To put it in perspective, drug overdoses are now the leading cause of accidental death in the United States. This means it has replaced automobile collisions in that spot.

Cancer Patients: The Risk of Opioid Addiction

The Cancer Treatment Centers of America emphasizes that cancer patients are not immune to opioid addiction. Cancer patients are often excluded from discussions surrounding opioid abuse, despite being exposed to opioid medications.

This is likely due to limited treatment options for pain management, and the fact that opioids are somewhat a necessity in this regard. Physicians have to include opioids to address pain in cancer patients. This is why opioid prescribing rates among cancer patients are substantially higher than those of other patients.

And although the government has addressed the crisis in different ways, the pain experienced by cancer patients is unique. Therefore, protecting them from the adverse effects of opioids is a lot more complicated.

The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) is working with lawmakers to ensure that the creation of new safeguards for pain management does not create barriers to access for cancer patients.

According to a 2018 study published by the Journal of Clinical Oncology, cancer patients who use opioids continuously after diagnosis is at risk of continued use after five years of survival.

### Pregnant Women: Also At Risk

Pregnant women are also at a greater risk of opioid addiction because it's hard to avoid painkillers when in recovery.

The Next Door is an organization that helps women battle their addiction to opiates, pregnant or not. Director of Nursing Nita Chester said that the center is trying to focus on using anti-inflammatory medicine to treat post-surgery pain.

"Anti-inflammatory drugs are huge because they're not mood altering and there's no dependency," said Chester. "The opioids just keep your brain from getting that pain signal while anti-inflammatory help to ease that and the pain."

Right now, the center takes care of ten pregnant women in its facility. The team is making sure their physicians are using non-opioid treatment if possible. "If there is an opioid issue, the doctor typically doesn't want to send them home because there's fear of abusing them," Chester says.

### Taking a Different Approach

In the midst of an opioid epidemic, physicians all over the country have tried to take a different approach when it comes to prescribing pain medications. Physicians, patients, and caregivers must all share responsibility in terms of taking the right precautions, especially for individuals who are more vulnerable to opioid addiction. [click the link to see Detroit's top rehab placement programs.](#)

Opioid addiction is difficult enough?dealing with cancer or going through pregnancy makes it even tougher. It

is the doctor's job to seek and employ proper opioid alternatives. Caregivers must try to enforce the right dosage at the right times. Patients must stay strong and follow the prescription carefully.

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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