



US Drug Overdose Deaths Drop for First Time Since 1990

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Preliminary government data recently made public shows that drug overdoses in the United States have declined by around five percent last year, suggesting that three decades of escalating deaths may have come to an end. This is the first time since 1990 that the number of drug overdose deaths in the US decreased.

This decline was due almost entirely to a dip in deaths from prescription opioid painkillers—medications that set off the worst drug epidemic in US history. Fatal overdoses involving other drugs such as Fentanyl and methamphetamine continue to rise.

The overall reduction, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suggests some possible relief from the epidemic that has so far reduced life expectancy in the country.

“It looks like there’s a light at the end of the tunnel,” said Dr. Andrew Kolodny, co-director of opioid policy research at Brandeis University. Still, he added: “There’s nothing to celebrate because the death toll is still very high.”

Even with a slight shift, the number of overdose deaths in 2018 was more than 68,000. This still exceeded the nation's peak annual deaths from car crashes, AIDS, or guns. Deaths often involve multiple drugs, so the categories are not mutually exclusive.

"We are all cautiously optimistic and grateful to see this drop," said Patrick Trainor, a spokesman for the Drug Enforcement Administration in Philadelphia. "But no one can point to any one thing."

Addiction experts and those in law enforcement believe that the drop in overdose deaths may be because of changes in prescribing that have tightened the supply of opioid pills. Click the link to see Plattsburgh's top rehab placement programs.

Doctors are now more cautious when it comes to prescribing opioid painkillers because of numerous limits instituted in many states over the past few years. Before heroin and Fentanyl surpassed prescription painkillers over the last decade, opioids were the main cause of overdose deaths.

More drug users also have access to treatment now, particularly to Naloxone, an overdose-reversing drug that has brought back thousands from the brink of death.

The general public is now also more aware of the immense danger of Fentanyl, which is around 50 times more potent than heroin, and about 100 times more potent than morphine. Fentanyl deaths continued to rise last year, but data showed they at least grew at a slower rate than in recent years.

"Lives are being saved, and we're beginning to win the fight against this crisis," said Alex M. Azar II, the secretary of Health and Human Services. He said that the new data showed "that America's united efforts to curb opioid use disorder and addiction are working."

However, the secretary pointed out: "By no means have we declared victory against the epidemic of addiction in general. This crisis developed over two decades, and it will not be solved overnight."

The new fatality data are based on completed death investigations and estimates from federal public health officials about how many open death investigations are likely to be ruled overdose deaths. Final numbers will not be released for several months. The numbers also do not include deaths occurring around the country caused by infectious diseases related to intravenous drug use like hepatitis C and endocarditis.

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid or alcohol 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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