Does Chronic Pain Lead To An Opioid Addiction?

by Louisville Addiction Treatment Center | Oct 12, 2022

Addiction can be a challenging and isolating struggle, but it is important to remember that you are not alone. If you are seeking addiction treatment in Louisville, Kentucky, there is hope.

Hundreds of people across the country live with debilitating chronic pain daily. This is hard to imagine unless you've been in a similar situation.

Most of us have experienced acute pain at some point, for instance when you touch a hot surface or hit your knee against a hard surface. This kind of pain lets us know that we've been hurt and normally goes away in a short time or when the primary cause has been sorted out.

Chronic pain is different. Pain is said to be chronic if it persists for more than 12 weeks despite treatment or medication. In most cases, chronic pain is associated with illnesses such as migraines, cancer, arthritis, fibromyalgia, lower back pain, etc. It happens when a disease or medical condition alters the nervous system making the body more sensitive to pain.

Chronic pain is often debilitating enough to affect an individual's quality of life. It interferes with their daily activities, reduces the energy they have, and negatively impacts their relationships.

Does Chronic Pain Lead To Opioid Addiction?

Managing chronic pain can be challenging. This is because some of the medicines that are most effective at managing this pain, i.e. opioids are also highly addictive. Doctors hesitate to prescribe these medicines for long-term use precisely because of this.

The most common opioids in the market used to treat moderate to severe pain include OxyContin (Oxycodone), Percocet (oxycodone/ acetaminophen), Vicodin, and Dilaudid. Others include methadone, morphine, and codeine.

Opioids are good at blocking pain thanks to how they work in the body. Once taken, these medications interact with the brain's chemical makeup as well as the central nervous system to block pain receptors. At the same time, they increase dopamine levels in the brain, leading to feelings of relaxation and euphoria while slowing down breathing, blood pressure, and heart rate.

Over time, individuals taking opioids may develop tolerance and dependence on these drugs. When this happens, they need to take higher amounts to achieve the same effect. Their bodies also become unable to function without the drugs and not taking them leads to various withdrawal symptoms, some of which are life-threatening.

Given their addictive nature, it's better to limit opioid use to the short term while finding alternative ways to manage chronic pain. This ranges from holistic methods like acupuncture and massage to the use of prescription-strength non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), corticosteroids e.g. Prednisone, acetaminophen, or muscle relaxants.

Reach Out to Us

If you or your loved one is battling an opioid addiction, you need the right addiction treatment program to overcome it.

Impact Outpatient Program in Kentucky can help you heal through our intensive outpatient and traditional outpatient programs. We also offer virtual telemedicine sessions for those who can't attend their treatment sessions in person. Our admissions process has been simplified and designed to help clients enter one of our individualized treatment programs within a day after their initial assessment.

Reach out to us today to see how we can help you get better.

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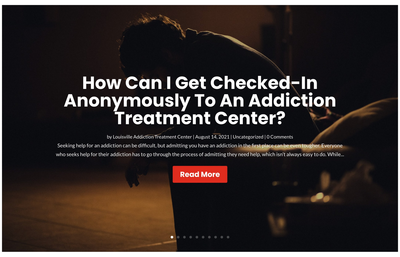

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