

## **FACT SHEET: Combatting the Opioid Crisis**

The American Dental Association (ADA) has long been committed to multidisciplinary efforts to end the tragic opioid epidemic that has devastated families and communities. In 2016, opioids (including prescription opioids, heroin and fentanyl) killed more than 42,000 people — more than any year on record.

- Most opioids prescribed to patients in the U.S. are written by physicians and other medical professionals for management of chronic (long-term) pain. Dentists with an appropriate license may also prescribe opioids, and do so most often for management of acute (short-term) pain such as severe tooth decay, extraction of teeth and root canals.
- Dentists prescribed nearly a half a million less opioids over past 5 years – 18.5 million in 2012; 18.1 million in 2017.
- Since 2012, the ADA has been offering free online [continuing education](#) on safe and effective opioid prescribing for dental pain.
- The ADA also produced a [clinical reference manual](#) in 2015 with techniques for managing dental pain for those who may be at risk for substance dependence.
- In 2016, the Association updated its [statement](#) on the use of opioids to treat dental pain. The statement encourages the use of non-narcotics as the first-line therapy for acute dental pain.
- The ADA has also sought to raise awareness about the misuse and abuse of opioid analgesics by partnering with a number of [outside organizations](#), including the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the United States Surgeon General.
- In October 2018, the ADA adopted a new policy on opioids supporting mandates on prescription limits and continuing education in what could be the first of its kind among major healthcare professional organizations. As part of the policy the ADA also supports the use of state prescription drug monitoring programs.