

Episode 43:

Understanding Opioids and the Crisis in
Canada (Part 2)

Host: Ken Rayner

Guest: Kathy Martin



Announcer

It's time for the *IHSA Safety Podcast*.

Enzo Garritano:

Welcome to the *IHSA Safety Podcast*. Again, I'm Enzo Garritano, President and CEO of IHSA. Today's episode is a follow-up to podcast 38, Understanding Opioids and the Crisis in Canada. In this episode, host Ken Rayner continues the conversation on opioids with IHSA's Mental Health and Wellness Specialist, Kathy Martin. Ken and Kathy, over to you.

Ken Rayner:

Thanks, Enzo. Kathy, we're here once again talking about mental health, and we recently launched a podcast episode number 38 on understanding opioids and the crisis in Canada with Mark Barnes and Bill Roy, that contain lots of helpful information on opioids. This is our follow-up to that podcast. So, let's perhaps start just as a reminder to our listeners, Kathy, what are opioids and why are they a real problem for workplaces in Ontario?

Kathy Martin:

All right. Well, opioids are drugs with pain relieving properties that are used primarily to treat pain. And opioids are usually prescribed for acute pain management after surgery or injury, and typically is meant for a temporary short duration until the healing has begun and that pain has subsided. However, they're also used in some cases to treat chronic or longer-term pain conditions. And opioids come in several forms, but we often think of them too as illicit drugs when we're thinking of this opioid crisis in society today. Things like street-produced fentanyl and heroin, for example.

You asked a great question, what are opioids and are they real problems for the workplace? And well, my answer might surprise people, because it's, no, opioids themselves are not the issue. And actually, I could argue that perhaps illicit drugs really are not much of a workplace concern. What is a problem, however, is the need to manage the risks that lead to opioid misuse and opioid-related harm is how we go about reducing these risks in the workplace, that should be front and center for workplaces. Refer to related harms when we're talking about things like opioid use disorder, overdose, or opioid poisoning, or deaths that happen in the workplace. And misuse of opioids can increase the chances of these opioid-related harms.

Ken Rayner:

So we've got new legislation that was introduced and *Working for Workers'* legislation that includes the need for certain employers to have naloxone kits available in high-risk workplaces. Does that fit into this?
