

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEDIA: REPORTING ON LOPERAMIDE MISUSE



WHEN REPORTING ON LOPERAMIDE MISUSE,
refer to the AP Stylebook and consider the following:

WHY IT MATTERS

Avoiding sensationalized and stigmatizing language when reporting about loperamide misuse is essential to preventing people from misusing loperamide.

Sensationalized language may:

- *Make it seem like the behavior is safe or normal.*
- *Unintentionally influence people at risk for misusing loperamide to begin doing so.*

Stigmatizing language may discourage people who are at risk from seeking treatment.

DO THIS...

- » *Use an appropriate modifier with the word "use" — such as "risky," "unhealthy," "excessive," or "heavy." Or use the term "misuse."*
- » *Use the phrase "person with an addiction."*
- » *Provide a resource for readers who may have an addiction to find support.*
- » *Use matter-of-fact headlines like:*
 - Man died from anti-diarrhea ingredient that can be 'dangerous' if misused, officials say
 - Some people with opioid addiction turn to anti-diarrhea drugs, a risky choice

RATHER THAN...

- » *Using the words "abuse" or "problem"*
- » *Referring to an individual as "an addict"*
- » *Stigmatizing people who may have an addiction by implying that they can easily change their behavior or using phrases like "getting clean"*
- » *Using sensationalized headlines like:*
 - Yes, people are really using an anti-diarrhea medicine to get high
 - Man dies from anti-diarrhea drug poisoning; experts say cases up 167 percent

LOPERAMIDE BACKGROUND

Loperamide (brand name Imodium®) is an over-the-counter and prescription medication approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to relieve the symptoms of diarrhea. Loperamide is used by millions of consumers and is safe and effective when used as directed.

Loperamide is a peripherally acting mu opioid agonist — a type of synthetic opiate that blocks the opioid receptors in the gut, but at very high doses can pass the blood-brain barrier and cause opioid-like effects. Recent reports show a small but growing number of individuals are consuming very high doses of loperamide in an attempt to self-manage opioid withdrawal or to achieve a euphoric high. At extreme doses, these individuals may experience severe or fatal heart issues.

SOURCES

- <https://www.apstylebook.com/>
- <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/06/11/531931490/change-from-addict-to-person-with-an-addiction-is-long-overdue>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3272222/>