



ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE IN AVIATION

OPIOIDS

What are opioids? The term 'opioids' describes the group of drugs that are derived from the opium plant and their synthetic alternatives. Morphine, codeine, pethidine, oxycodone, buprenorphine, methadone and heroin are opioids.

The primary use of opioids is the relief of strong pain, as they provide a very effective analgesic (pain-relieving) effect. Other medical uses include control of coughs and diarrhoea, and the treatment of addiction to other opioids. Opioids can also produce euphoria, making them prone to abuse.

Opioids and safety

Opioids are depressants, slowing down the activity of the central nervous system and messages going to and from the brain and the body.

The safety impact of opioids depends largely on what type and quantity of the substance has been consumed, as well as the person's tolerance to the drug. The potential safety impacts may include:

- drowsiness or starting to 'nod off'
- taking longer to respond to events or situations and possibly choosing an inappropriate response
- reduced ability to think clearly
- blurred vision.

Long-term and short-term effects of opioids

Low doses of opioids suppress the sensation of pain and the emotional response to pain. They may also produce:

- euphoria
- drowsiness
- relaxation
- difficulty concentrating
- constricted pupils
- slight decrease in respiratory rate
- nausea and vomiting
- constipation
- loss of appetite
- sweating.

With higher doses, these effects are more intense and last longer. Opioids slow down the part of your brain that controls breathing. Signs of overdose include slow breathing, bluish skin and coma. Death can result, usually because breathing stops.

Long-term use of opioids may cause:

- mood instability
- constricted pupils (impaired night vision)
- constipation
- decreased libido
- menstrual irregularities.

Addiction to opioids can have devastating long-term social, financial and emotional effects.

Aviation workplace requirements

In accordance with Civil Aviation Safety Regulation Part 99, personnel who perform, or are available to perform, safety-sensitive aviation activities are subject to random alcohol and other drug (AOD) testing. Testing may be conducted to detect the presence of opioids, including opiates above the permitted level.

For testable drugs, the permitted level is a concentration of the testable drug in 100 mls of blood that is less than the confirmatory target concentration for that drug specified in Table 5.1 of the Australian Standard 4760-2006.

The aim of the testing program is preventative, not punitive. However, the regulations provide for a suitable enforcement regime to deal with personnel whose tests return confirmed readings over the permitted levels for drugs or alcohol.

OPIOIDS

Community support services

Alcohol and Drug Information Service

Each state and territory has an AOD information telephone service. Many operate 24 hours and offer a free-call number for people living in regional areas.

Australian Capital Territory
24 Hour Alcohol and Drug Telephone Line
02 6207 9977

New South Wales
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
02 9361 8000 or 1800 422 599 (rural)

Northern Territory
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1800 131 350

Queensland
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
07 3236 2414 or 1800 177 833 (rural)

South Australia
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1300 13 13 40

Tasmania
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1800 811 994 (24 hour)

Victoria
DirectLine
1800 888 236

DrugInfo
1300 85 85 84

Family Drug Helpline
1300 660 068

Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS Line)
03 9418 1020 or 1800 014 446 (rural)

Western Australia
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
08 9442 5000 or 1800 198 024 (rural)

Parent Drug Information Service
08 9442 5050 or 1800 653 203 (rural)

CASA contacts
CASA has established a virtual resource centre on AOD in the Australian aviation sector, providing comprehensive policy and program advice, resources for education and training purposes, self-assessment tools, links to useful documents and services, and a range of other materials. The website can be found at www.casa.gov.au/aod.

CASA AOD Program Manager
The Program Manager for the CASA AOD initiative can be contacted at aod@casa.gov.au.