**Opioids Actually Prolong Pain**

**Opioids like morphine, OxyContin, and Vicodin are among the most commonly used -- and abused -- prescription painkillers in the U.S. A new study reveals, however, that these powerful drugs can actually intensify and extend physical suffering. University of Colorado neuroscientists simulated chronic nerve pain in rats by pinching the sciatic nerve in their legs. While one group was given morphine for five days, a control group received no treatment. After assessing the rats' pain threshold, the researchers found the untreated rodents recovered in about five weeks. The morphine-treated rats, on the other hand, remained in pain for up to 12 weeks, Forbes.com reports. Morphine and other opioids seem to reshape the nervous system to amplify pain signals even after the original illness or injury subsides, prolonging and worsening discomfort, researchers said. "We are showing for the first time," says study author Peter Grace, "that even a brief exposure to opioids can have long-term negative effects." *(The Week magazine, June 17, 2016)***

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