Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription. These drugs are chemically related and interact with opioid receptors on nerve cells in the body and brain. Opioids are generally safe when taken for a short time as prescribed by a doctor, but they can be misused (taken in a way not prescribed by a doctor, or in a larger quantity than prescribed) or taken by a doctor—can lead to dependence and, when misused, opioid pain relievers can lead to overdose incidents and deaths. Regular use—even as prescribed without a doctor’s prescription—can lead to dependence and, when misused, opioid pain relievers can lead to overdose incidents and deaths. The opioid epidemic understanding
Epidemic

- a widespread occurrence of a disease

- especially something unpleasant

- a rapid development, spread, or growth of something.