

Landmarks Pharmacy News

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Opioids Tied to Risk of Fatal Infections-risk of pneumonia and meningitis



In a [new report published in the Annals of Internal Medicine](#), researchers looked at 1,233 patients with invasive pneumococcal disease, an infection that is fatal in about 10 percent of cases, with higher death rates in the elderly. They compared them with 24,399 controls.

People with invasive pneumococcal disease were 62 percent more likely than those in the control group to be using prescription opioids. The association

was strongest for high-potency drugs like oxycodone and for long-acting drugs like methadone and transdermal fentanyl. The study controlled for many variables, including sex, race, alcohol use,

Opioid use may increase your risk of infectious diseases like [pneumonia](#) and [meningitis](#), according to the above study.

As Americans have used an increasing number of opioid medications and [addiction](#) to these painkillers has become a bigger problem, the health concerns surrounding these drugs have increased. Now, this new study suggests that opioid use could raise the risk for serious invasive pneumococcal infections.

Past studies in animals have suggested a possible link between opioid use and infections, but the authors of the current study wanted to test that potential link in humans. They found that opioid use was an independent risk factor for certain infectious diseases.

Among the more than 25,000 study participants, using high doses of opioids or highly potent or long-acting formulations appeared to increase the risk of infection.

These researchers said health care providers should consider the risk of infection when talking about pain management with patients. If you are concerned about your opioid use or risk of infection, reach out to your health care provider. Contact our Pharmacist for Consultation.

This study was published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

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