

# Opioid prescriptions drop for first time in two decades

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(HealthDay)—In a sign that the opioid epidemic might be waning, new

data show that the number of opioid prescriptions has dropped for the first time in 20 years.

Ever since Oxycontin was first brought to the market in 1996, prescriptions have increased significantly. But, in 2013, 2014, and 2015, fewer patients were prescribed these medications, *The New York Times* found in an analysis of several sources of data. The trend suggests that doctors might finally be responding to repeated [government efforts](#) to curb use of the drugs, experts told the *Times*. "The culture is changing," Bruce Psaty, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., a researcher at the University of Washington in Seattle who studies [drug safety](#), told the newspaper. "We are on the downside of a curve with opioid prescribing now."

IMS Health, which gathers prescribing information for the health care industry, found a 12 percent decline in opioid prescriptions nationally since a peak in 2012, the *Times* reported. Another data company, Symphony Health Solutions, reported an 18 percent drop during the same time period, the newspaper said. And IMS also found that opioid prescriptions have fallen in 49 states since 2013.

But those figures have not translated into fewer fatal overdoses from opioids, the newspaper added. Those statistics continue to increase, with more than 28,000 deaths reported in 2014, according to the most recent federal health data.

**More information:** [More Information](#)

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