

Rx & OTC Drugs



Prescription (Rx) and Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs can be extremely effective in treating medical conditions when taken correctly. However, these are powerful drugs that when taken incorrectly or recreationally can lead to serious health issues and possible addiction.

Pain Medications when taken correctly are very effective and can help people with chronic pain lead productive lives. Many prescribed pain medications are opioids, and heroin is an example of an illegal street drug that is an opioid.

Frequently prescribed Opioids include:

- ◆ Oxycodone (OxyContin)
- ◆ Propoxyphene (Darvon)
- ◆ Hydrocodone (Vicodin)

PAIN MEDICATION SIDE EFFECTS

Muscle relaxation	Coma
Severe dependence	Seizure
Lowered blood pressure	Lowered heart rate
Dryness of the mouth	Constipation
Lowered respiratory rate	

Depressants, or barbiturates, are generally prescribed to treat anxiety, tension and sleep disorders. When used correctly, it is very effective in relaxing their recipient and slowing down normal brain functioning. Rohypnol and GHB are both classified as date rape drugs, and are an example of the illegal use of depressants.

Commonly prescribed depressants are:

- ◆ Pentobarbital sodium (Nembutal)
- ◆ Diazepam (Valium)
- ◆ Alprazolam (Xanax)

DEPRESSANT SIDE EFFECTS

Respiratory depression	Sweating
Elevated heart rate	Addiction
Impaired memory	Disorientation
Fatigue	Tremors

Stimulants are used primarily in the medical field for treating narcolepsy, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and depression. They are also used for short-term treatment of obesity and asthma patients. They are intended to increase alertness, attention and energy. Methamphetamine (ice) and cocaine are examples of illegal street drugs that are stimulants.

Commonly prescribed stimulants are:

- ◆ Dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine)
- ◆ Methylphenidate (Ritalin)

STIMULANT SIDE EFFECTS

Irregular heartbeat	Compulsive use
Addiction	Bone Pain
Paranoia	Vomiting
Respiratory depression	Constipation
High body temperature	Muscle Pain

OTC drugs such as cough and cold syrup and antihistamines are an effective tool for treating illnesses or allergies not severe enough to see a doctor for. However, there is a dissociative hallucinogenic ingredient present in many of these products called Dextromethorphan (DXM) that can be abused to produce effects similar to PCP.

Common products that contain DXM:

- ◆ Any product with "tussin" in the name
- ◆ Cough & cold products
- ◆ Antihistamines
- ◆ Decongestants

Statistics...

- ◆ In Hawaii, the street price of Oxycontin has increased 20% due to high demand and hydrocodone has quickly become the most abused pharmaceutical drug in the islands.
- ◆ In 2003, 5% of Hawaii 12th graders had tried tranquilizers or sedatives at least once; this puts usage rates in youth equivalent to that of methamphetamine (ice).

Nationally:

- ◆ Annual abuse of Vicodin was 9.5% among 12th graders in 2005, ranking it among the most commonly abused drugs for 12th graders.
- ◆ Since 2001, annual abuse of sedatives/barbiturates among 12th graders rose 25%
- ◆ In 2005, of 1.4 million emergency room visits, 27% were associated with a pharmaceutical drug, 36% involved a combination of illicit drugs, alcohol and pharmaceuticals.
- ◆ From 1998 to 2000, the number of emergency room visits due to misusing hydrocodone (Vicodin) rose 48%, oxycodone (OxyContin) 108%, and methadone 63%. The rates are intensifying: from mid-2000 to mid-2001, oxycodone went up in emergency room visits 44%.
- ◆ Over 15 years, the number of teen and young adult (ages 12 to 25) new abusers of prescription painkillers such as oxycodone (OxyContin) or hydrocodone (Vicodin) grew five-fold (from 400,000 in the mid-eighties to 2 million in 2000).

Rx Drug Misuse

- ◆ New misusers of tranquilizers — medicine normally used to treat anxiety or tension — went up nearly 50% in one year (700,000 in 1999 to 1 million in 2000).
- ◆ More than 17% of adults over 60, knowingly or not, abuse prescription drugs.
- ◆ Among 12 to 17 year-olds, girls are more likely than boys to use psychotherapeutic drugs non-medically.

Don't Mix Your Meds



- ◆ Combining prescription medications with other drugs or alcohol without consulting your physician can be very dangerous.
- ◆ Can slow breathing, heart rate and respiration.
- ◆ Mixing stimulants and antidepressants enhances the effects of the stimulant, resulting in irregular heart beat, dangerously high body temperature, cardiovascular failure, or seizures.
- ◆ Opioids should never be used with substances such as alcohol, antihistamines, barbiturates or benzodiazepines. These substances slow breathing, and when combined with opioids, an individual would be in jeopardy of severe life-threatening respiratory depression.
- ◆ Bottom line: ALWAYS follow your medical professional's directions, and DON'T MIX YOUR MEDICATIONS.

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All information was compiled by the Prevention Resource Center of Drug-Free Hawaii. Sources: www.drugabuse.gov, www.streetdrugs.org, NIDA Community Drug Alert Bulletin on Club Drugs, Drug Enforcement Administration, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 4rehabilitation.com, Partnership for a Drug-Free America, Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), 2005: National Estimates of Drug-Related Emergency Department Visits

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