

MIND YOUR MEDICINE

Ever hear the phrase “Too much of a good thing can hurt you?” Nowhere is this saying more true than with prescription medicine. Under the supervision of doctors, prescription medication helps countless people cope with or overcome serious physical and mental health problems. But people who abuse medicines or take them for fun can end up making themselves sicker than they ever dreamed.

Medicines that help people can actually hurt them when the instructions are not followed. Some people take a larger amount than they are supposed to or take them more often.

Prescription drug abuse can have serious medical consequences.

Even worse are the people who abuse prescription medicine without ever being sick in the first place. They receive none of the benefits these drugs provide to sick people while receiving all of the negative risks, including permanent organ damage, addiction, overdose and death. There are three commonly abused types of prescription medicine: stimulants, depressants and opioids. Let’s learn how each drug helps sick people, and how misuse can make a healthy person sick.



WHAT ARE STIMULANTS?

Also known as ‘study drugs,’ stimulants are performance enhancing drugs that heighten energy and focus by increasing brain activity. They are used to treat physical and mental disorders, including narcolepsy and attention deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD).

Stimulants are colorful pills or tablets that are usually swallowed but are occasionally crushed and snorted. Common examples include Ritalin, Adderall, and Vyvanse. Stimulants are commonly abused by those who believe they need an extra boost of energy.

Stimulant abuse makes a user focused, alert, excited and talkative. It also increases a user’s heart rate, breathing and blood pressure. A user may become aggressive, paranoid or even violent.

Physically, stimulant use has many unpleasant side effects. Users may have more acne, dry mouths, itchy skin, headaches, blurry vision and diarrhea. Abusers may develop speech problems or experience memory loss. Over the long term, stimulant abuse can lead to brain bleeding, seizures and fatal heart attacks.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

www.samhsa.gov

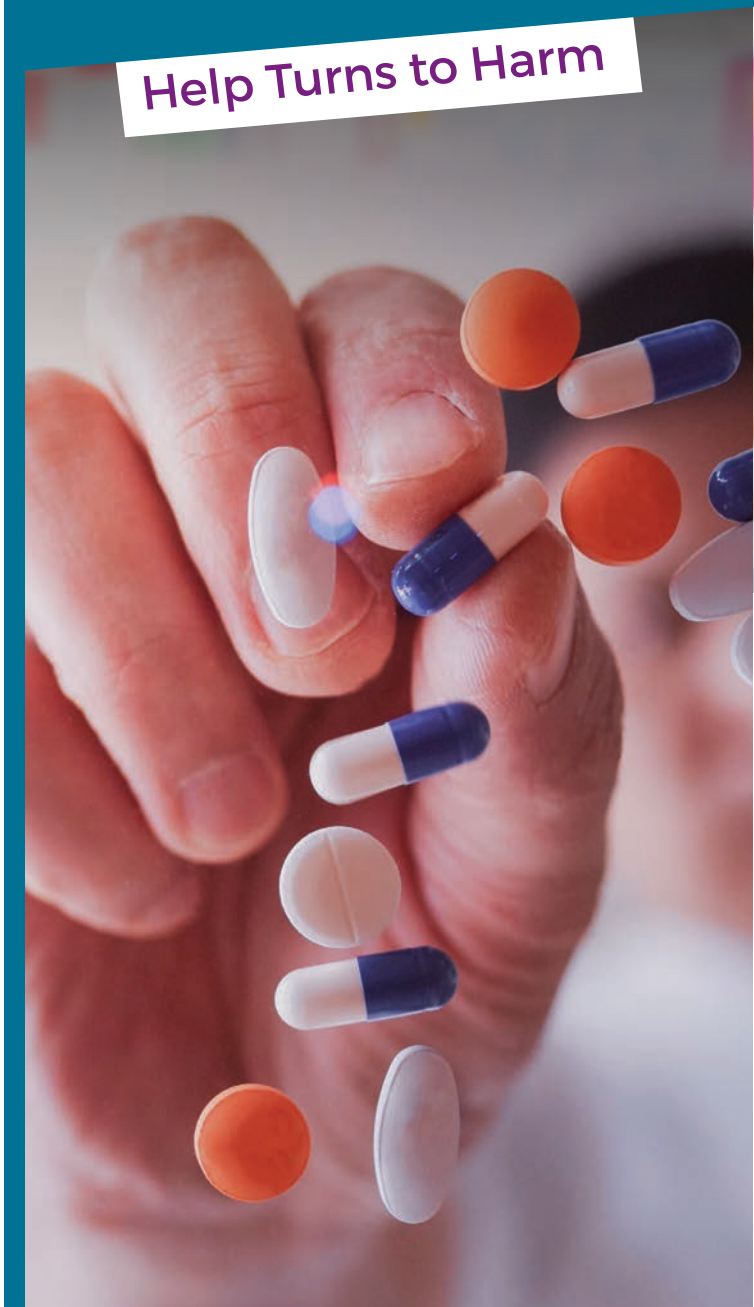
1-800-622-HELP

National Institute on Drug Abuse

www.drugabuse.gov

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

Help Turns to Harm



in the know

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WHAT ARE DEPRESSANTS?

Depressants are the most widely abused prescription drug and slow down a user's brain and body functions. They are used to treat anxiety and depression, sleep disorders such as insomnia and can also be used to relieve pain.

Barbiturates and benzodiazepines are the two types of depressants most commonly abused. Brand names for barbiturates include Seconal, Tuinal and Nembutal. Brand names for benzodiazepines include Valium, Tranxene and Xanax.

Depressant users may feel sleepy as their breathing and brain activity slow down. They may have confused thoughts, slurred speech and a loss of coordination that can lead to harmful accidents. They also have problems remembering things, and their moods may swing quickly back and forth between happy and sad.

Depressant abuse destroys a person's brain and body. The brain may race out of control once the effects of the drug wear off. This can cause seizures, breathing problems, a slowed heart rate and comas.

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids are a type of drug that relaxes the body and puts the user in a dreamlike state. Most opioids are prescribed to relieve serious pain and come in pill or tablet form. Some examples are OxyContin, Percocet, Demerol and Vicodin.

Opioids help people cope with the pain of serious injuries or deadly illnesses such as terminal cancer. Opioids block pain receptors to cause a sense of calm and relief in patients, both physically and mentally. Tolerance to opioids develops quickly, and users feel less and less relief with every dose. This tolerance leads to addiction. Opioid abuse can also cause nausea, slow breathing brain damage and overdose.

ADDICTION? WITHDRAWAL? OVERDOSE? YES, YES, AND YES

While these three types of prescription medications all help people in different ways, they have some very deadly risks in common.

Opioids and depressants are both highly addictive drugs. They rewire your brain, making it very difficult to stop. Users quickly build a tolerance to these drugs, meaning they have to take a larger amount to feel the same effects. At the same time, users' bodies become dependent on the drug, meaning they have to take it all the time to feel normal. If they try to stop, they will feel any number of negative effects, such as vomiting, diarrhea, sleeplessness, anxiety

or severe pain in their muscles and bones. This is called withdrawal. Users usually do not develop a physical dependence to stimulants. However, they may begin to use them unnecessarily and in greater quantities—a mental addiction, in other words.

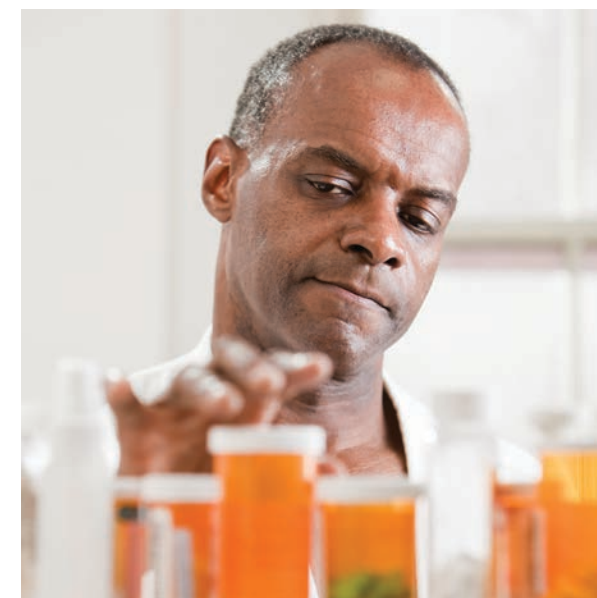
Overdose is a real danger with any prescription medication. Taking too much of any of these drugs can kill a person. A stimulant overdose can cause comas, seizures or heart attacks. Depressant and opioid overdoses can slow down a person's body functions to the point that they stop working altogether.

BY PRESCRIPTION ONLY

There's a reason that depressants, stimulants, and opioids have phrases on their labels like "Use only as recommended." Research shows that these drugs can help sick people if they are taken the right way, but are harmful when abused.



Taking too much of any of these drugs can kill a person.



Don't play with your health. Abusing prescription medication is not a way to have fun or a short-term fix to a problem. It is a long-term, bad habit that you could carry around for the rest of your life.

GET HELP NOW!

Prescription drug abuse is no light matter. It is serious and life threatening. If you need help, there are many people and places to turn to. The first place you can start is by opening up to a trusted friend or family member about what is going on. A counselor, coach, nurse, or other trusted figure in your life will also be willing to help you. There are call centers and rehab facilities dedicated to getting those impacted by prescription drug abuse the help they need.

If you or someone you know is impacted by prescription drug abuse, don't wait. Get help now!