

Fast Facts: Know Your Prescription Drugs

Oxycodone and hydrocodone belong to a class of drugs called opioids. Other classes of drugs frequently abused by teenagers are central nervous system (CNS) depressants and stimulants, as well as anabolic steroids. Certain over-the-counter medicines (OTC) can also be abused when not taken as directed. It is important to note that many prescription drugs or OTC medications can produce dangerous health effects when taken concurrently or taken with alcohol.

PAINKILLERS Also known as narcotics or opiates. Examples include morphine, codeine, oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin, Lortab) and fentanyl (Duragesic patches). These drugs are generally prescribed to treat severe pain.
Dangers when abused: Addiction, depressed breathing, and death. Effects are increased by simultaneous use of alcohol.

DEPRESSANTS Prescribed to treat anxiety and sleep disorders. Examples are zolpidem (Ambien), diazepam (Valium), and alprazolam (Xanax).
Dangers when abused: Slowing of normal brain function. Large doses can depress breathing and cause a coma. Long-term abuse can lead to physical dependence and addiction.

STIMULANTS Often prescribed to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Examples include methylphenidate (Ritalin) and amphetamine (Adderall).
Dangers when abused: Elevated blood pressure and heart rate. High doses can cause dangerously high body temperature and cardiac arrest brought on by an abnormal heartbeat.

ANABOLIC STEROIDS Prescribed to treat hormone deficiency in males and breast cancer in females. Examples include testosterone (AndroGel, Androderm patch, Depo-testosterone, and Delatestryl injection), and stanozolol (Winstrol).
Dangers when abused: Cancer, heart attack, infertility, breast development in males, facial hair in females, halted bone growth, and liver tumors.

Resources for Educators

New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement
1-866-811-7957
www.nyhealth.gov/professionals/narcotic

New York State Office of Alcohol
and Substance Abuse Services
www.oasas.state.ny.us

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.drugabuse.gov/parent-teacher.html

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
www.justthinktwice.com

Partnership for a Drug Free America
www.drugfree.org



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ATTENTION EDUCATORS!

Prescription Drug Abuse Alert



NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement

Prescription Drug Abuse Trend Continues

The 2007 'Monitoring the Future' survey, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), surveyed over 48,000 students concerning teenage drug abuse. The study shows there has been a dramatic increase in the use of prescription drugs for nonmedical purposes. Of 12th graders surveyed, an alarming 15% reported using a prescription drug non-medically within the past year. The study also shows that students are now choosing to abuse prescription drugs instead of street drugs.

Recent figures from the Partnership for a Drug-Free America also reveal that teen prescription drug abuse is on the rise. The Partnership states that 1 in 5 teens report abusing a prescription pain medication and an equal number report abusing a prescription stimulant or tranquilizer. According to the Partnership, every day 2,500 teenagers use a prescription drug for the first time to get high. Adding to the concern, teens in some communities are engaging in a dangerous activity called "pharm parties" where teens gather up whatever medications they can find – old prescriptions of their own, pills from their families' medicine cabinet – and share them. With a computer and a credit card, it's also easy for teens to obtain prescription drugs from illegal Internet sites.



Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medicines

OTC drugs are available at a pharmacy without a prescription. Like prescription drugs, they are safe when used according to package directions or when following a medical professional's recommendations. OTC medicines, including sleep aids such as doxylamine (Unisom), antihistamines such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) and dimenhydrinate (Dramamine), and cough suppressants containing dextromethorphan (DXM), have been abused for their psychoactive effects. The 2007 Monitoring the Future showed that 4% of 8th graders, 5% of 10th graders and 7% of 12th graders took cold or cough medicines containing DXM during the past year to get high, a practice that can result in serious physical harm.

In the Hallway

A recent NIDA sponsored survey found that one in four teens with legitimate prescriptions have been approached by other students to share their pills. Abuse of stimulant medications to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) by students ages 12-17 has resulted in an increase in emergency room visits. In January 2006, a Food and Drug Administration advisory panel recommended that ADHD medications carry a warning of increased potential for cardiac problems, such as hypertension, cardiac arrest and stroke. The possibility of experiencing medical problems may be exacerbated by using ADHD medications improperly, or in combination with other drugs.

Students need to know that abusing prescription drugs is no different than abusing street drugs. Taking a controlled substance prescribed for someone else is not only dangerous but illegal and could result in arrest and possible jail time. Students should be aware that sharing or selling their prescription medication is illegal and could also result in criminal charges.

