

PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE



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WHAT IS PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE?

Misuse of prescription drugs means taking a medication in a way that is not prescribed, taking someone else's medication (even if for a medical reason), or taking a medication to get high.

MYTH: It is safer to use prescription drugs to get high rather than using illegal drugs, because they are prescribed by a doctor or dentist and dispensed by a pharmacist.

FACT: Any use of prescription drugs without a doctor's recommendation can be as dangerous as using illegal drugs. Misuse can have serious health effects, including addiction, overdose, and even death.

Commonly misused prescription drugs fall under three categories:

- Opioids—Painkillers like Vicodin® or codeine
- Depressants—Used to relieve anxiety or help someone sleep, like Valium® or Xanax®
- Stimulants—Used for treating attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, like Adderall® or Ritalin®



WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS?

Misusing opioids can be addictive, cause severe respiratory depression, and even cause death. Misusing depressants can cause sleepiness, impaired mental functioning, blurred vision, and be addictive. Misusing

stimulants can cause irregular heartbeat, paranoia, high fever, and can be addictive.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Some students misuse Adderall® and Ritalin® to try to get better grades. Misuse of these medications can lead to psychosis, paranoia, heart attack, and seizures.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

- Misusing prescription opioid painkillers, like OxyContin® and Vicodin®, can lead to addiction.
- Can you die from prescription drug misuse? **YES!**
- The majority of drug overdose deaths (more than seven out of ten) involve an opioid.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Use of any prescription drug without a doctor's orders continued at the lower levels set in 2021, after the pandemic onset. In 2023, past 12-month prevalence in 12th grade was 4%, where it has hovered since 2021, and was substantially lower than the 8% level in 2020.

Source: Monitoring the Future

FOR DRUG USE PREVENTION INFORMATION, VISIT DEA'S WEBSITES:

For parents, caregivers,
and educators
[GetSmartAboutDrugs.com](https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com)

For teens
[JustThinkTwice.com](https://www.justthinktwice.com)

For college and university
campuses
[CampusDrugPrevention.gov](https://www.campusdrugprevention.gov)