

What prescription drugs are commonly abused?

The prescription drugs that are commonly abused in the United States fall into several broad categories: opioids/narcotics/pain relievers, depressants, and stimulants. Individuals abuse these drugs because they are an easily accessible and inexpensive means of altering a user's mental and physical state; the effects vary depending upon the drugs they abuse.

Drug Type	Common Brand Names
Opioids/narcotics/pain relievers	Dilaudid, Lorcet, Lortab, OxyContin, Percocet, Percodan, Tylox, Vicodin
Depressants (benzodiazepines, tranquilizers, barbiturates, sedatives)	Librium, Valium, Xanax
Stimulants	Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin

How are prescription drugs abused?

Prescription drugs are abused in a variety of ways. Many of the prescription drugs that are commonly abused are available as tablets. Typically abusers either consume the tablets orally or crush them into a powder, which they then snort. In some instances, abusers dissolve crushed tablets in water and then inject the solution.

Who abuses prescription drugs?

Individuals of all ages abuse prescription drugs—data reported in the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse indicate that an estimated 36 million U.S. residents aged 12 and older abused prescription drugs at least once in their lifetime. The survey also revealed that millions of teenagers and young adults abuse prescription drugs—2.7 million individuals aged 12 to 17 and 6.9 million individuals aged 18 to 25 abused prescription drugs at least once.

Prescription drug abuse among high school students is a particular concern. According to the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future Survey, more than 10 percent of high school seniors in the United States abused narcotics (other than heroin) at least once in their lifetime. Nearly 17 percent abused amphetamines (a type of stimulant), 10 percent abused barbiturates, and 11 percent abused tranquilizers at least once.

What are the risks?

The risks associated with prescription drug abuse vary depending upon the drugs that are abused. Abuse of opioids/narcotics/pain relievers can result in life-threatening respiratory depression (reduced breathing). Individuals who abuse depressants, including benzodiazepines, tranquilizers, barbiturates, and sedatives, place themselves at risk of seizures, respiratory depression, and decreased heart rate. Stimulant abuse can cause high body temperature, irregular heart rate,

cardiovascular system failure, and fatal seizures. It can also result in hostility or feelings of paranoia. Individuals who abuse prescription drugs by injecting them expose themselves to additional risks, including contracting HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), hepatitis B and C, and other blood-borne viruses.

How are they obtained?

Prescription drugs are obtained in various ways. In some cases, unscrupulous pharmacists or other medical professionals either steal the drugs or sell fraudulent prescriptions. In a process known as doctor shopping, abusers visit several doctors to obtain multiple prescriptions. Individuals also call pharmacies with fraudulent prescription refills, or they alter prescriptions. Prescription drugs occasionally are stolen from pharmacies.

Young people typically obtain prescription drugs from peers, friends, or family members. Some individuals who have legitimate prescriptions sell or give away their drugs. Young people also acquire prescription drugs by stealing them from relatives and other individuals with legitimate prescriptions or from school medicine dispensaries.

Is abusing prescription drugs illegal?

Yes, it is illegal to use prescription drugs without a valid prescription or to distribute them. The penalties associated with the abuse or illegal distribution of prescription drugs vary depending upon the drug type.

Street Terms for Commonly Abused Prescription Drugs

Opioids/Narcotics/ Pain Relievers	Barbiturates
OxyContin	Barbs
Hillbilly heroin	Blue birds
Oxycet	Phennies
Oxycotton	Reds
	Tooties
	Yellows
Percocet	Yellow jackets
Percs	
Vicodin	Stimulants
Happy pills	Ritalin
Vikes	Kiddy cocaine
	Vitamin R
	West Coast
Depressants	Amphetamines
Xanax	Bennies
Totem poles	Black beauties
	Crosses
Benzodiazepines	Hearts
Candy	LA turnaround
Downers	Speed
Sleeping pills	Truck drivers
Tranks	Uppers

Check out Fast Facts on:

- Crack cocaine
- Crystal methamphetamine
- Drug paraphernalia
- DXM
- Foxy
- Fry
- GHB and analogs
- Heroin
- Inhalants
- Jimsonweed
- Ketamine
- Khat
- LSD
- Marijuana
- MDMA
- Methadone
- Methamphetamine
- OxyContin
- PCP
- Powdered cocaine
- Psilocybin
- Ritalin
- Rohypnol
- Salvia divinorum
- Steroids
- Teens and drugs
- Triple C
- Yaba

Other products of interest:

- *Huffing—The Abuse of Inhalants*
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Questions and Answers



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