

Prescription Drug Misuse

What you need to know:

Prescription drugs are medications that can be given only by health care providers, like doctors, and they play an important part in treating diseases and saving lives. Prescription drugs can be dangerous when they are not used, or thrown away, in the right way. Taking medicine that is not yours, mixing it with alcohol, or using it with other drugs your doctor doesn't know about can cause injury and sometimes even death.

What is prescription drug misuse?

Prescription drug misuse is when someone takes a prescription drug in a way that is different than how it was prescribed. For example:

- Taking more than you should or mixing it with other drugs or alcohol
- Taking the medicine without a prescription
- Taking medication to feel "high"

What are the consequences of prescription drug misuse?

In Los Angeles County (LAC):	Every year in LAC, prescription drug overdoses contribute to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 in 20 adults misuse prescription drugs• 1 in 5 teens misuse prescription drugs• About 70% of abused prescription drugs come from family and friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 400 deaths• 14,500 hospitalizations• 9,000 emergency department visits• 2,500 treatment admissions into publicly funded programs

What are the myths about prescription drug misuse?

1) Prescription drugs are not addictive.

Your brain can respond similarly to prescription drugs and street drugs, and both can lead to addiction.

2) It's okay to use prescription drugs without a doctor's permission.

Only a medical provider can tell you how to use them safely. Prescription drugs obtained from illegitimate sources can be counterfeit and may contain other substances, such as fentanyl, that may lead to overdose and death.

3) Prescription drugs are safe because they are legal and widely available.

Prescription drugs are only safe when used correctly and under a doctor's care. Misuse can cause injury and even death.



Key Messages

- Always take prescription drugs the way your doctor told you to.
- You should not take prescription drugs that are not prescribed to you.
- Prescription drugs can be addictive and cause death if used in the wrong way.
- You can get rid of old or unused prescription drugs at a local LA County Sheriff's Station.

Where can you go for more information?

Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health
<http://ph.lacounty.gov/sapc>
888-742-7900

Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Administration
<http://www.samhsa.gov>
877-726-4727

National Institute on Drug
Abuse
<http://www.drugabuse.gov>

How can I safely get rid of prescription drugs?

You can bring old or unused prescription drugs to an LA County Sheriff's Department safe drug drop-off box. They're open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To find a location, visit <http://www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org>.

What prescription drugs are abused most often?

Drug Type	Brand Name	Street Name	Warning Signs
Opioids, Narcotics, & Pain Relievers	Dilaudid, Fentanyl, Lorcet, Lortab, Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin	Happy Pills, Hillbilly Heroin, OC, Oxy, Percs, Vikes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow reflexes • Feeling very tired • Trouble breathing • Slow pulse • Low blood pressure • Euphoria (extreme joy)
Depressants	Ambien, Librium, Valium, Xanax	Barbs, Red Birds, Candy, Downers, Sleeping Pills, Tooies, Tranks, Yellows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleepiness • Confusion • Memory problems • Acting drunk without the smell of alcohol
Stimulants	Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin	Bennies, The Smart Drug, Hearts, Uppers, Vitamin R, Skippy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble sleeping • Irregular heartbeat • High blood pressure • Anxiety

What can I do to prevent prescription drug misuse?

You can help prevent prescription drug misuse. Act now:

- 1) Keep track of your medicine and put it in a safe place, out of the reach of children and away from pets.
- 2) Get rid of your old medicine in a safe way.
- 3) Know the facts about prescription drug misuse.

Do I need treatment for misusing or abusing prescription drugs?

Answer the following questions...

In the last 3 months, have you felt you should cut down or stop using prescription drugs?
 Yes or No

In the last 3 months, has anyone annoyed you or gotten on your nerves by telling you to cut down or stop using prescription drugs?
 Yes or No

In the last 3 months, have you felt guilty or bad about how much you use prescription drugs?
 Yes or No

In the last 3 months, have you been waking up wanting to use prescription drugs?
 Yes or No

If you answered yes to at least two questions, please contact your doctor or call **1-888-742-7900** to find a local substance use disorder treatment program.