

Prescription for Disaster

# How Teens Misuse Medicine





To locate your local Poison Control Center or for assistance on recommended treatment for the ingestion of household products and medicines, go to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, <http://www.aapcc.org/> or call the Poison Help Line at 1-800-222-1222, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



# Prescription for Disaster

# How Teens

# Misuse Medicine

A DEA Resource for Parents – 2018 edition

This publication is designed to be a guide to help the reader understand and identify the current medications that teens are misusing. It is not all-inclusive; not every dosage unit or generic form of the medications can be listed due to space constraints and the frequent introduction of new drugs.

For more information, visit the following DEA websites:

For general information: [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov)

For colleges and universities: [www.campusdrugprevention.gov](http://www.campusdrugprevention.gov)

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

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



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# Prescription Drug Misuse

A prescription drug is a drug that is available only with authorization from a healthcare practitioner or a pharmacist.

The most misused prescription drugs fall under three categories:

## Opioids

→ Medications that relieve pain such as Vicodin®, OxyContin®, or codeine

## Depressants

→ Substances that can slow brain activity such as benzodiazepines used to relieve anxiety or help someone sleep, like Valium® or Xanax®

## Stimulants

→ Substances that increase attention and alertness and are used for treating attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), such as Adderall® or Ritalin®

Misusing **opioids** can cause severe respiratory depression or death and can be addictive

Misusing **depressants** can cause sleepiness, impaired mental functioning, blurred vision, and nausea and can be addictive.

Misusing **stimulants** can cause irregular heartbeat, paranoia, and high body temperatures and can be addictive.



# Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medications



Over-the-counter (OTC) medicines are drugs you can buy without a prescription. They are safe and effective when you follow the directions on the label and as directed by your health care professional.

*FDA, Understanding Over-the-Counter Medicines  
[www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/  
BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/UnderstandingOver-the-CounterMedicines/default.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/UnderstandingOver-the-CounterMedicines/default.htm)*

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration decides whether a medicine is safe enough to sell over-the-counter.

Taking OTC medicines still has risks. Some interact with other medicines, supplements, foods, or drinks. Others cause problems for people with certain medical conditions.

*U.S. National Library of Medicine, Over-the-Counter Medicines  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/overthecountermedicines.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/overthecountermedicines.html)*

# Non-medical Use of Prescription Drugs

Most prescription drugs are safe and effective when used correctly for a medical condition and under a doctor's or dentist's supervision. But they can have serious side effects if not used correctly. Using a prescription for non-medical reasons can lead to a substance use disorder or even death.

## What is Non-medical Use of Prescription Drugs?

- taking someone else's prescription medication;
- taking a prescription medication in a way other than prescribed;
- taking prescription medication to get high; or
- mixing it with other drugs.

*Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse,  
[teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/prescription-drugs](https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/prescription-drugs)*



From 2010-2016,  
heroin-related deaths  
increased by more  
than **five times**.



Source: [www.cdc.gov/  
drugoverdose/data/heroin.html](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/heroin.html)

The relationship between prescription drug misuse and increases in heroin use in the United States is under scrutiny. Currently available research demonstrates:

- Prescription opioid use is a risk factor for heroin use.
- Prescription opioids and heroin have similar effects, but different risk factors.
- A subset of people who misuse prescription opioids might progress to heroin use.
- Heroin use is driven by its low cost and high availability.

Source: *National Institute on Drug Abuse*,  
[www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports)

# How Big is the Problem?

Although most people take prescription medications as directed, in 2016, **6.2 million** persons or 2.3 percent of the population (12 years and older) misused a prescription drug at least once in the past month. In 2016, **1.8 million** persons aged 12 or older had a pain reliever use disorder.

*2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health,  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*

According to a national survey, **16.8 percent** of high school students took a prescription drug without a doctor's prescription (such as OxyContin®, Percocet®, Vicodin®, codeine, Adderall®, Ritalin®, or Xanax®), one or more times during their life.

*Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, CDC, 2015*



**Prescription drug misuse means taking a medication in a manner or dose other than prescribed; taking someone else's prescription, even if for a legitimate medical complaint such as pain; or taking a medication to feel euphoria.**

*Source: [www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/misuse-prescription-drugs/summary](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/misuse-prescription-drugs/summary)*

# Reading the Rx Label



Labels on prescription and OTC drugs contain information about ingredients, uses, drug interactions, warnings, and directions that are important to read and understand. It is especially important to teach teens how to read labels and use prescription and OTC drugs as directed.

## What Are The Types of Drug Interactions?

Drug-drug interactions occur when two or more drugs react with each other. This may cause you to experience an unexpected side effect. For example, mixing a drug you take to help you sleep (a sedative) and a drug you take for allergies (an antihistamine) can slow your reactions and make driving a car or operating machinery dangerous.

Drug-condition interactions may occur when an existing medical condition makes certain drugs potentially harmful. For example, if you have high blood pressure, you could experience an unwanted reaction if you take a nasal decongestant.

It is also important to recognize that everyone's metabolism and brain chemistry are different, and the same drugs can have very different effects on individuals. Experimenting with medicine to get high is extremely dangerous, and mixing drugs to get high can be deadly.

# How Teens Misuse Medicine

Prescription drugs are the most commonly misused substances by teens after marijuana and alcohol. When teens misuse prescription drugs and take them in different amounts or for reasons other than as they are prescribed, they affect the brain and body in ways very similar to illicit drugs.

When prescription drugs are misused, they can be addictive and have harmful health effects such as overdose (especially when taken along with other drugs or alcohol). An overdose is when a drug is swallowed, inhaled, injected, or absorbed through the skin in excessive amounts and injures the body. Overdoses are either intentional or unintentional. If the person taking or giving a substance did not mean to hurt themselves or others, then it is unintentional.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose)*

**Some teens** use prescription stimulants to try to improve mental performance. Teens and college students sometimes misuse them to try to get better grades. Taking prescription stimulants for reasons other than treating ADHD or narcolepsy could lead to harmful health effects, such as addiction, heart problems, or psychosis.

*Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse, [www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/prescription-stimulants](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/prescription-stimulants)*

According to a national survey, among 12th graders, 5.5 percent used Adderall non-medically in the past year.

*Source: 2017 Monitoring the Future Study.*

**Remember: Sharing prescription drugs with family members or friends is illegal.**

## Where do teens get their prescription drugs?

Many teens obtain prescription drugs from their family or friends.

Teens find prescription drugs and OTC drugs in their home medicine cabinet or on the kitchen shelf.

For persons aged 12 or older who misused a prescription pain reliever in the past year (i.e., 11.5 million people):

**40.4 percent** got the pain reliever they used most recently from a friend or relative for free.

**35.4 percent** received their pain reliever through a prescription from one doctor.

**8.9 percent** bought the pain reliever from a friend or relative.

**6.0 percent** bought the last pain reliever they misused from a drug dealer or stranger.



*Source: 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*

# How Teens Misuse Medicine

## Possible warning signs of teen drug use

Teens are known to have mood swings. However, some behaviors may indicate more serious issues, such as abuse of drugs and alcohol. Here are some common warning signs of drug use.

### → Problems at school

- Poor academic performance
- Missing classes or skipping school
- Decreased interest in school or school activities
- Complaints from teachers or classmates

### → Physical signs

- Bloodshot eyes
- Pinpoint pupils (common sign of opiate use)
- Constant scratching (common sign of opiate use)
- Burns on fingers or lips (from smoking joints or something else through a metal or glass pipe)



## → Changes in behavior

- Changing friends or social circles
- Isolation from family or friends
- Excessive demand for privacy
- Lack of respect for authority

## → Money issues

- Sudden requests for money without a good reason
- Money stolen from your wallet or from safe places at home
- Missing cash or other resources (which may be sold to buy drugs)

## → Drug paraphernalia

- Finding items in your child's room, backpack, or car related to drug use

Source: [www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com](http://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com)

# The Internet, Social Media, Drugs, and Teens

Many teens obtain prescription drugs from their family or friends. Since prescription drugs are widely available in the home, teens often do not have to go far to find ways to get high. Other teens turn to the internet and social media for prescription drugs; the internet also plays a big role in providing information and advice to teens.

**HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER**





**Your teen probably knows a lot more** about the internet than you do. It's never too late for parents to jump in and get acquainted with various websites, communication methods, networking systems, and the lingo teens use to fly under parents' radars.

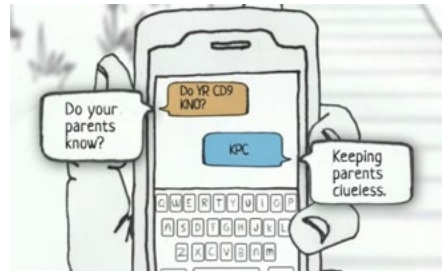
**Some pharmacies operating on the internet** are legal, and some are not. In fact, according to the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP), 20 new illegal pharmacies appear on the web each day. Some of the legal internet pharmacies have voluntarily sought certification as "Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites" (VIPPS®) from NABP. "Rogue" pharmacies pretend to be authentic by operating websites that advertise powerful drugs without a prescription or with the "approval" of a "doctor" working for the drug trafficking network. Teens have access to these websites and are exposed to offers of prescription drugs through e-mail spam or pop-ups. Parents should be aware of which sites their teens are visiting and should examine credit card and bank statements that may indicate drug purchases.

# The Internet, Social Media, Drugs, and Teens

Social media sites play a role in providing information and advice to teens on how to use prescription drugs to get high. Teens are exposed to offers of prescription drugs through social media sites, e-mail spam, or pop-ups.

It is never too late for parents to get acquainted with various websites, social media sites, and the slang terms teens use to communicate while texting and using social media.

Parents should be aware of which sites their teens are visiting and should examine credit card and bank statements that may indicate medication purchases. They should also check the browser history to see which sites their teen is visiting on their computers and cellphones.





**Teens sometimes brag about their drugging** and drinking on social networking sites such as YouTube, SnapChat, and Facebook. Posting pictures of themselves in compromising scenes may hurt their reputation and opportunities for employment and education. Their behavior is out there in the open for future employers, college admissions offices, and others to see.

**The Internet is a tremendous resource** for teens to learn about the dangers of drug abuse. However, it is also full of information about how to use prescription drugs to get high—how much to use, what combinations work best, and what a user can expect to experience.

**YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat are the most popular online platforms among teens.** Fully 95 percent of teens have access to a smartphone, and 45 percent say they are online “almost constantly,” according to a study from Pew Research Center. Just less than half (44 percent) of teens – defined in this report as those ages 13 to 17 – go online several times a day, while 11 percent report going online less often.

*Source: Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2018  
[www.pewinternet.org/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/](http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/)*

# The Internet, Social Media, Drugs, and Teens

Teens are diversifying their social network site use

Teens use a variety of social media platforms with 85 percent using YouTube, 72 percent using Instagram, 69 percent using Snapchat, 51 percent using Facebook, and 32 percent using Twitter.

*Source: Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2018  
[www.pewinternet.org/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018](http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018)*



There are thousands of websites dedicated to the proposition that drug use is a rite of passage. So-called experts are more than happy to walk your kids through a drug experience. }

**DON'T LET THEM.**



# Misconceptions

“Street drugs” is a term that refers to drugs that are commonly known as illegal drugs – cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, and others. Many teens wrongly believe that prescription drugs are safer than “street drugs” for a variety of reasons:

- These are medicines.
- They can be obtained from doctors, dentists, pharmacies, friends, or family members.
- It is not necessary to buy them from traditional “drug dealers.”
- Information on the effects of these drugs is widely available in package inserts, advertisements, and on social media sites.

**Parents and teens need to understand that when over-the-counter and prescribed medications are used to get high, they are every bit as dangerous as “street drugs.” And when prescribed drugs are used by or distributed to individuals without prescriptions, they are every bit as illegal.**

# Drug-impaired Driving



**What is drug-impaired driving?** Driving under the influence of over-the-counter medications, prescription drugs, or illegal drugs.

**Why is drug-impaired driving dangerous?** Over-the-counter (OTC) medications and prescription drugs affect the brain and can alter perception, mental processes, attention, balance, coordination, reaction time and other abilities required for safe driving. Even small amounts of some drugs can have a measurable effect on driving.

*Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) 2016.*

A national survey showed 20 percent of weekend nighttime drivers tested positive for illegal, prescription, or OTC drugs that can impair driving.

*Source: Results of the 2013–2014 National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use by Drivers, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*

**What substances are used the most when driving?** After alcohol, marijuana is the drug most often found in the blood of drivers involved in crashes.

**What happens when you use drugs and drive?** Marijuana can decrease a person's ability to drive a car. It slows reaction time, impairs judgment of time and distance, and decreases coordination. It is dangerous to drive after mixing alcohol and marijuana. Driving after using prescription drugs or over-the-counter medicine, such as cough suppressants, antihistamines, sleeping aids, and anti-anxiety medications can impair driving.

**No one should drive after using marijuana or other drugs, and should not get in a car with a driver who has used marijuana or other drugs!**

**Remember:** any medications that act on parts of the brain can impair driving. Many prescription drugs have warning labels against the operation of machinery and driving motor vehicles for a certain period of time after use.

**You are more likely to be injured or in an accident while driving under the influence of drugs.**

# Illegal Internet Pharmacies

Some pharmacies operating on the internet are illegal. No one should use a website to purchase a prescription drug unless –

- 1. the person has obtained a valid prescription from a medical practitioner who has conducted an in-person medical evaluation of the person, and
- 2. the website is operating in accordance with the Ryan Haight Act.

## Report Suspicious Internet Pharmacies

If you or your teen is aware of someone distributing prescription drugs or selling them on a suspicious internet pharmacy site, you can report it to the DEA 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, by using the RxAbuse online reporting tool located at [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov) or by calling the DEA hotline toll free at **1-877-RxAbuse (1-877-792-2873)**.





## Ryan Haight

**Francine Haight**, Ryan's mother, shares her son's story with the world: "Ryan Thomas Haight overdosed and died on February 12, 2001, on narcotics (Vicodin®) that he had easily purchased on the internet. A medical doctor on the internet that he never saw prescribed them, an internet pharmacy mailed them to his home. He was only 17 when he purchased them; he was only 18 when he died."

Through the efforts of Francine Haight and members of Congress, with support from DEA, the Ryan Haight Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act of 2008 was enacted. The Act aims to remove and prosecute unscrupulous or rogue internet pharmacies that sell controlled prescription medicines to persons without a prescription from a registered physician. These pharmacies lack quality assurance and accountability. This law has enabled DEA to prosecute cybercriminals supplying controlled substances and to shut down the illegal online pharmacies.

# What is Drug Addiction?

Addiction is defined as a chronic, relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences. It is considered a brain disease because drugs change the brain; they change its structure and how it works. These brain changes can be long lasting and can lead to many harmful, often self-destructive, behaviors.

*Source: The Science of Drug Abuse and Addiction: The Basics*  
[www.drugabuse.gov/publications/media-guide/science-drug-abuse-addiction-basics](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/media-guide/science-drug-abuse-addiction-basics)

Prescription drug misuse can have serious medical consequences.

Increases in prescription drug misuse during the past 15 years are reflected in increased emergency room visits, overdose deaths related to prescription drugs, and treatment admissions for prescription drug use disorders, the most severe form of which is addiction.

*Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse*  
[www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/misuse-prescription-drugs/summary](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/misuse-prescription-drugs/summary)

# Common Drugs of Abuse



## Categories of Drugs:

Illegal drugs and legitimate medications are categorized according to their medical use, potential for abuse, and their potential for creating physical or psychological dependence.

The Controlled Substances Act regulates six classes of drugs:

- Narcotics
- Stimulants
- Depressants
- Hallucinogens
- Anabolic Steroids
- Over the Counter Substances

Within each class are substances that occur naturally and substances created in laboratories (synthetics). When they are used appropriately in the practice of medicine, these substances can have beneficial properties. When used for non-medical purposes, including the desire to get high, these drugs can cause great harm and even death.

# narcotics

→ substances that dull the senses and relieve pain

## HEROIN AND OTHER OPIOIDS

### Narcotic Medicines

Used to treat mild to severe pain (anything from dental surgery to terminal cancer). Also used to suppress coughs, treat diarrhea, induce sleep, and treat heroin addiction.

### Forms

Liquid, tablet, capsule, skin patch, powder, syrup, lollipop, and suppository.

### Adverse Effects

Slowed physical activity, constriction of the pupils, flushing of the face and neck, constipation, nausea, vomiting, and slowed breathing.

### Overdose Effects

Slow and shallow breathing, clammy skin, confusion, convulsions, coma, and possible death.

## Narcotic medications available only with a prescription:

(Note: Lists are not all-inclusive.)

{ **codeine cough syrup** } ROBITUSSIN A-C SYRUP® | MYTUSSIN AC COUGH SYRUP®  
Cough syrups sometimes include other ingredients such as antihistamines (promethazine). Some controlled substances, including cough syrups, can be dispensed by a pharmacist without a prescription (21 C.F.R. 1306.26).

slang names: **Lean, Purple Drank, Sippin Syrup**

{ **fentanyl** } DURAGESIC PATCH® | ACTIQ LOZENGE®  
Fentanyl is a very powerful painkiller, 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin as an analgesic. Encounters with fentanyl that are not medically supervised are frequently fatal. This narcotic is most commonly used by wearing a patch or sucking on a lozenge, but like heroin, it may also be smoked, snorted, or injected. A new effervescent tablet, Fentora®, is now available to place between the cheek and gum.

slang names: **China Girl, China White, Dance Fever, Tango & Cash**

{ **fentanyl-like substances** }  
Fentanyl-like substances have recently made a resurgence in the illicit drug market. The biological effects of fentanyl-like substances are similar to fentanyl, including severe respiratory depression (decreased breathing) that can result in death. Fentanyl-like substances are often indistinguishable from fentanyl or heroin, and are ingested in similar manners to these substances. Some recent examples of fentanyl-like substances include acetyl fentanyl, 4-fluoroisobutyryl fentanyl (4-FIBF), cyclopropyl fentanyl among many others.

{ **hydrocodone** } VICODIN® | LORTAB® | LORCET® | HYDROCODONE WITH ACETAMINOPHEN  
Hydrocodone products are used for pain relief and cough suppression. Hydrocodone products are the most frequently prescribed opioids in the United States, and they are also the most misused narcotic in the United States.

# narcotics

## { **methadone** } DOLOPHINE® | METHADOSE®

Methadone has been used for years to treat people with a heroin use disorder. It is also used as a powerful painkiller. While it may be legally used under a doctor's supervision, its non-medical use is illegal. Methadone is available as a tablet, oral solution, or ingestible liquid. Tables are available in 5mg and 10mg formulations. As of January 1, 2008, manufacturers of methadone hydrochloride tablets 40mg have voluntarily agreed to restrict distribution of this formulation to only those facilities authorized for detoxification and maintenance treatment of opioid addiction, and hospitals.

## { **oxycodone** } OXYCONTIN® | PERCODAN® | TYLOX

Oxycodone products are very powerful painkillers. Oxycodone is widely used in clinical medicine. It is marketed either alone as controlled release (OxyContin®) or immediate release formulations (OxyIR®), or in combination with other non-narcotic analgesics such as aspirin (Percodan®) or acetaminophen (Roxicet®). Oxycodone's behavioral effects can last up to five hours. The drug is most often administered orally. The controlled-release product, OxyContin®, has a longer duration of action (8-12 hours).

slang names: **Hillbilly Heroin, Kicker, OC, Ox, Oxy, Perc, and Roxy.**

## Other abused narcotics

- { **meperidine** } DEMEROL®
- { **hydromorphone** } DILAUDID®
- { **oxycodone with acetaminophen** } ENDOCET®
- { **codeine** } FIORINAL®
- { **morphine** } ROXANOL SR®
- { **oxycodone with acetaminophen** } ROXICET®
- { **pentazocine** } TALWIN®
- { **cough syrup with hydrocodone** } TUSSIONEX®

## How are narcotics abused?

Narcotics/opioids can be swallowed, smoked, sniffed, or injected.

## Where would a teen obtain narcotics?

Friends, relatives, medicine cabinets, pharmacies, nursing homes, hospitals, hospices, doctors, and online. They can also be purchased on the street.

# narcotics



5mg 7.5mg 10mg

{ LORTAB® }



10mg 20g 40mg 80mg

{ OXYCONTIN® }

\*hydrocodone bitartrate-acetaminophen



\*5-500mg \*10-660mg \*7.5-750mg

{ VICODIN® }



600mcg 400mcg 600mcg

{ ACTIQ® }



## { GLOSSARY }

With repeated use of narcotics, tolerance and dependence develop.

**Tolerance** *occurs when the person no longer responds to the drug in the way that person initially responded. Stated another way, it takes a higher dose of the drug to achieve the same level of response achieved initially.*

Source: NIDA, The Neurobiology of Drug Addiction: Definition of Tolerance  
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/teaching-packets/neurobiology-drug-addiction/section-iii-action-heroin-morphine/6-definition-tolerance>

**Physical Dependence** *is not equivalent to addiction, and can happen with the chronic use of many drugs—including many prescription drugs, even if taken as instructed. It occurs when the body adapts to the drug, requiring more of it to achieve a certain effect and eliciting drug-specific physical or mental symptoms if drug use is abruptly ceased.*

Source: NIDA, Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide (Third Edition)  
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-drug-addiction-treatment-research-based-guide-third-edition/frequently-asked-questions/there-difference-between-physical-dependence>

# stimulants

→ substances that stimulate bodily activity and reverse fatigue (“uppers”)

COCAINE (POWDER OR CRACK), METHAMPHETAMINE, AMPHETAMINES, SYNTHETIC CATHINONES (BATH SALTS)



## Stimulant Medicines

Many stimulants have legitimate medical use and are scheduled by the DEA. Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants that are not controlled. Stimulant medicines are used to treat obesity, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and narcolepsy. Pseudoephedrine, found in allergy and cold medications to relieve sinus congestion and pressure, is also a stimulant chemical. Cocaine and methamphetamine have a currently accepted, albeit limited, medical use in treatment. Crack cocaine and khat have no legitimate medical uses.

## Forms

Pills, powder, rocks, and injectable liquids.

## Adverse Effects

When stimulants are misused and not under a doctor's supervision, they are frequently taken to produce a sense of exhilaration, enhance self-esteem, improve mental and physical performance, increase activity, reduce appetite, extend wakefulness for a prolonged period, and get high.

## Overdose Effects

Taking too large a dose at one time or taking large doses over an extended period of time may cause such physical side effects as dizziness, tremors, headache, flushed skin, chest pain with palpitations, excessive sweating, vomiting, and abdominal cramps.

In overdose, unless there is medical intervention, high fever, convulsion, and cardiovascular collapse may precede death.

## Stimulant medications available only with a prescription:

(Note: Methamphetamine and cocaine have limited legitimate medical uses. Lists are not all-inclusive.)

{ **amphetamines** } ADDERALL® | DEXEDRINE® | DESOXYN® (METHAMPHETAMINE)

Amphetamines are used to treat ADHD.

slang names: **Bennies, Black Beauties, Crank, Ice, Speed, Uppers**

{ **methylphenidate and dexamethylphenidate** } CONCERTA® | RITALIN® | FOCALIN®

These drugs are used to treat ADHD.

slang names: **Pellets, R-Ball, Skippy, Vitamin R**

{ **synthetic cathinones (bath salts)** }

Illicit substances with no medical use ingested to mimic the effects of drugs including methamphetamine, cocaine, MDMA, or PCP.

slang names: **Molly, Ecstasy, Salts**

{ **methamphetamine** }

Ingestion of the stimulant methamphetamine can result in severe agitation, delirium, hallucinations, irregular heartbeat, heart attack, and possibly death. Methamphetamine is a highly addictive substance and can be snorted, smoked, or injected.

slang names: **Meth, Ice**

# stimulants

## Other misused stimulants

{ **phentermine** } ADIPEX® | IONAMIN®

{ **benzphetamine** } DIDREX®

{ **phendimetrazine** } PRELU-2®

These drugs are used in weight control.

## How are stimulants misused?

Stimulants can be pills or capsules that are swallowed. Smoking, snorting, or injecting stimulants produces a sudden sensation known as a “rush” or a “flash.”

## Where would a teen obtain stimulants?

Friends, relatives, doctors, pharmacies, schools, online, and street drug dealers.



5mg 10mg 20mg 10mg

{ RITALIN® }



37.5mg 100mg 200mg

{ ADIPEX® }

{ PROVIGIL® }



5mg 10mg

{ DEXEDRINE® }



25mg 10mg

{ FOCALIN® }



5mg 20mg

{ FOCALIN XR® }

# depressants

→ substances that induce sleep, relieve anxiety and muscle spasms, and prevent seizures



ALCOHOL, VALIUM®, XANAX®, TRANQUILIZERS, SLEEPING PILLS, ROHYPNOL®, GHB

## Depressant Medicines

Depressants will put you to sleep, relieve anxiety and muscle spasms, and prevent seizures.

### Forms

Pills, syrups, and injectable liquids.

### Adverse Effects

Slurred speech, loss of motor coordination, weakness, headache, lightheadedness, blurred vision, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, low blood pressure, and slowed breathing.

### Overdose Effects

Signs can include shallow breathing, clammy skin, dilated pupils, weak but rapid pulse, and coma. Overdose may be fatal.

## Depressant medications available only with a prescription:

(Note: Lists are not all-inclusive)

{ **benzodiazepines** } VALIUM® | XANAX® | RESTORIL® | ATIVAN® | KLONOPIN®

Benzodiazepines are used as sedatives, hypnotics, anticonvulsants, muscle relaxants, and to treat anxiety. Benzodiazepines were developed to replace barbiturates, though they still share many of the undesirable side effects, including tolerance and dependence.

slang names: **Benzos, Downers, Nerve Pills, Tranks**

{ **sleeping pills** } AMBIEN® | LUNESTA® | SONATA®

These depressants are sedative-hypnotic medications approved for the short-term treatment of insomnia.

## Other misused depressants

{ **chloral hydrate** } SOMNOTE®

{ **barbiturates, such as butalbital and pentobarbital** }

{ **GHB** } XYREM®

{ **carisoprodol** } SOMA®

{ **ketamine** } KETALAR®

Please note that even though ketamine is a dissociative drug used as an anesthetic in veterinary practice, it is misused for its hallucinogenic effects.

# depressants

## How are depressants abused?

Individuals misuse depressants to experience euphoria. Depressants are also used with other drugs to add to the other drugs' high or to deal with their side effects. Depressants like GHB and Rohypnol are also misused to facilitate sexual assault.

## Where would a teen obtain depressants?

Family medicine cabinet, friends, family members, online, doctors, and hospitals.

### a PARENT'S story }

Jason Surks was 19 and in his second year of college, studying to be a pharmacist, when he died of an overdose of depressant pills. After his death, his parents discovered that he had been ordering controlled substances from an internet pharmacy in Mexico. His mother, Linda, writes: "I thought to myself that this couldn't be possible. I work in prevention, and Jason knew the dangers—we talked about it often. I think back to the last several months of my son's life, trying to identify any signs I might have missed.

*"I remember that during his first year in college, I discovered an unlabeled pill bottle in his room. I took the pills to my computer and identified them as a generic form of Ritalin. When I confronted Jason, he told me he got them from a friend who'd been prescribed the medication. He wanted to see if they would help him with his problem focusing in school. I took that opportunity to educate him on the dangers of abusing prescription drugs and told him that if he really thought he had ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), we should pursue this with a clinician. He promised he would stop using the drug. But as a pre-pharmacy major, maybe he felt he knew more about these substances than he actually did and had a 'professional curiosity' about them."*

Source: As recounted on [www.drugfree.org/memorials](http://www.drugfree.org/memorials).





1mg 2mg 7.5mg

{ ATIVAN® }



{ RESTORIL® }



1mg 2mg

{ XANAX® }



.5mg 3mg

{ XANAX XR® }



2mg 5mg 10mg

{ VALIUM® }



.5mg 1mg 2mg wafer, 1mg

{ KLONOPIN® }



# hallucinogens

→ drugs that can cause hallucinations, agitation, delirium, seizures, and other adverse health effects

SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS (SPICE/K2), SYNTHETIC CATHINONES (BATH SALTS), LSD-LIKE SUBSTANCES, PCP-LIKE SUBSTANCES, MDMA-LIKE SUBSTANCES (ECSTASY/MOLLY)



## Hallucinogenic Substances

### Forms

Used to promote euphoria and hallucinogenic experiences

**Synthetic Cannabinoids:** often encountered on green plant material resembling marijuana in appearance and intended to be smoked or diluted in liquid form to be used in e-cigarettes.

**Bath Salts:** often encountered in powder, rock, or pill form; can be used by snorting, injecting, or swallowing (pill form).

**LSD- and PCP-like substances:** often found applied to blotter paper or in powder form that can be snorted, swallowed, or placed in mouth.

### Adverse Effects

Wide range of effects that can include hallucinations, agitation, delirium, seizures, coma, heart attacks, hypertension, and many others.

### Overdose Effects

Varies depending on substance, but overdose often requires medical attention to treat symptoms and can be fatal even with medical intervention or hospital care.

### { synthetic cannabinoids }

Synthetic cannabinoids are chemicals meant to mimic the psychoactive effects of THC but have been shown to be extremely potent in regard to their adverse effects. The synthetic cannabinoid powder is dissolved in liquid before being applied to a green plant material to resemble the physical appearance of marijuana or used in an e-cigarette. Severe adverse effects including hallucinations, agitation, delirium, seizures, coma, heart attacks, hypertension, and death.

slang names: **K2, Mojo, Skooby Snax, Spice**

# anabolic steroids

→ drugs used to enhance performance, increase muscle mass, and improve appearance

TESTOSTERONE

## Anabolic Steroids

Synthetically produced variants of the naturally occurring male hormone testosterone, which are misused to promote muscle growth, enhance athletic or other physical performance, or improve physical appearance. Only a small number of anabolic steroids are approved for either human or veterinary use. Steroids may be prescribed by a licensed physician for the treatment of testosterone deficiency, delayed puberty, low red blood cell count, breast cancer, and tissue wasting resulting from AIDS.

## Forms

Tablets and capsules, sublingual tablets, liquid drops, gels, creams, transdermal patches, subdermal implant pellets, and water-based and oil-based injectable solutions.

## Adverse Effects

**Males:** In adults, shrinking of the testicles, reduced sperm count, enlargement of the male breast tissue, sterility, and an increased risk of prostate cancer. In boys, early sexual development, acne, and stunted growth.

**Females:** In adolescent girls and women, deepening of the voice, increasing facial and body hair growth, menstrual irregularities, male pattern baldness, and lengthening of the clitoris.

**Both:** High cholesterol levels, which may increase the risk of coronary artery disease, strokes, and heart attacks; acne; and fluid retention. Oral preparations of anabolic steroids, in particular, can damage the liver.

**Upon discontinuation:** When users stop taking steroids, they might experience depression severe enough to lead one to attempt suicide.

## Steroids available only with a prescription:

(Note: Lists are not all-inclusive)

{ **anabolic steroids** } ANADROL® | ANDRO® | DECA-DURABOLIN® |  
DEPO-TESTOSTERONE® | DURABOLIN® | EQUIPOISE® | OXANDRIN® | THG® | WINSTROL®

There are over 100 different types of anabolic steroids.

slang names: **Arnolds, Juice, Pumpers, Roids, Stackers, Weight Gainers**

### How are steroids misused?

Steroids are taken orally, injected, or applied to the skin. The doses misused are often 10 to 100 times higher than the approved therapeutic and medical treatment dosages. Users typically take two or more anabolic steroids at the same time in a cyclic manner, believing this will improve their effectiveness and minimize the adverse effects.

### Where would a teen obtain steroids?

The internet is the most widely used means of buying and selling anabolic steroids. Steroids are also bought and sold at gyms, bodybuilding competitions, and schools from teammates, coaches, and trainers.

# anabolic steroids

## THREE PARENTS' STORIES

These three young men were athletes who sought ways to enhance their performance. Each of them turned to steroids, and each of them suffered the depression that can come when steroids are stopped.



{ DEPO-TESTOSTERONE® }

{ TAYLOR HOOTON }

**Died at age 17.** It took a while for his parents to connect Taylor's recent weight and muscle increases with his uncharacteristic mood swings and violent, angry behavior. He had been using a cocktail of steroids and other hormones to bulk up, and the drugs were wreaking havoc on his body and emotions. Taylor went to his room and hanged himself. It was only after his death that the whole picture came into focus.

{ ROB GARIBALDI }

**Died at age 24.** When supplements and workouts did not produce the desired results, Rob turned to steroids. According to Rob, he first obtained steroids from his trainer at the University of Southern California, whose name Rob never divulged. With a wink and a nod, they kept his use a secret. The desire and need to look bigger, be stronger, and avoid losing muscle gains already achieved prompted him to continue steroid use. Over time, Rob gained 50 pounds and became the powerhouse the steroids promised. Drinking alcohol or taking any other drug, including prescription medication, compounds the adverse effects of steroids. The most dangerous adverse effect of steroids is upon discontinuation, when users might experience depression severe enough to lead them to attempt suicide. His parents said: "We know, without a doubt, steroids killed our son."

{ EFRAIN MARRERO }

**Died at age 19.** Efrain was secretly using steroids to prepare for football season. He was a standout offensive lineman in high school and then played at the junior college level. However, he decided he wanted to move from the offensive line to more of a "glory" position at middle linebacker. Any football fan seeing Efrain would recognize the significant physical transformation it would take for him to make that happen. As his parents tell it, "Efrain began using steroids, under the impression that it would make him bigger, stronger, faster, and earn him the title and recognition he so much desired." Unaware of the serious side effects of steroids, Efrain began to experience severe paranoia and deep depression. Frightened, he turned to his parents for help, who took him to the family doctor. The doctor assured them that the steroids would leave Efrain's system soon and that no further action was required. No one knew that quitting steroids cold turkey was unwise; the physician failed to provide an appropriate course of action. Three weeks later, Efrain shot himself in the head.

# over-the-counter

→ medications with DXM (hallucinogen)

ROBITUSSIN<sup>®</sup>, CORICIDIN HBP<sup>®</sup>, NYQUIL<sup>®</sup>



## OTC Medicines with DXM

There are more than 120 over-the-counter cold medicines that contain dextromethorphan (DXM), either as the only active ingredient or in combination with other active ingredients.

These medications (store brands as well as brand names) can be purchased in pharmacies, grocery stores, and other outlets.

## Forms

Cough syrup, tablets, capsules, or powder

## Adverse Effects

Some of the many psychoactive effects associated with high-dose DXM include confusion, inappropriate laughter, agitation, paranoia, and hallucinations. DXM intoxication also has physical effects, including over-excitability, lethargy, loss of coordination, slurred speech, sweating, hypertension, and involuntary spasmodic movement of the eyeballs.

## Overdose Effects

DXM overdose can be treated in an emergency room setting and generally does not result in severe medical consequences or death. Most DXM-related deaths are caused by ingesting the drug in combination with other drugs. DXM-related deaths also occur from impairment of the senses, which can lead to accidents.



## How are OTC cold medications with DXM misused?

DXM misuse has traditionally involved drinking large volumes of the OTC liquid cough preparations. More recently, however, misuse of tablet and gel capsule preparations has increased.

## Where would a teen obtain OTCs with DXM?

Friends, relatives, pharmacies, grocery stores, and discount department and warehouse stores. DXM products and powder can also be purchased online.

**Warning** signs of OTC cold medicine misuse include:

Empty cough medicine boxes or bottles in child's room, backpack, or locker.

Purchase or use of large amounts of cough medicine when not ill.

Missing boxes or bottles of medicine from home medicine cabinet.

Visiting websites that provide information on how to misuse DXM.

*Source: <http://stopmedicineabuse.org>.*

{ TRENDS

# What You Can Do

Because prescription drugs are legal, they are easily accessible. Parents, law enforcement personnel, educators, the medical community, and all levels of government have a role to play in reducing the nonmedical use of prescription drugs.

**Talk** with your teen about the consequences of misusing prescription and OTC drugs and the importance of healthy choices.

**Choose the right time to talk.** When talking to your child, be sure your child is sober or has not been using drugs before talking about drugs and alcohol.

**Voice your suspicion.** Begin by expressing your concerns without making accusations.

**Be specific.** Explain what you observed to make you concerned. For example, you found missing pills or an empty pill bottle, or your child's appearance indicates a potential problem.

**Be prepared for strong reactions.** Your child may accuse you of snooping or say you're crazy. Stay calm.

**Reinforce what you think about drug use.** Tell her how much you care for him or her.

**Get help from the experts.** Contact the school counselor, school nurse, or family doctor about your concerns.

**TIP:** A teen that is using drugs or alcohol needs to be evaluated by a professional for a possible substance use disorder.

**Ask** teens what they find out about prescription drugs at school, at friends' homes, at parties, and on social media sites.

**Get** information about teen abuse of prescription drug medications. Learn what the medication is used for, what it looks like, its effects and interactions, and how teens are using it.

For more detailed information, see Section 4 (How Do I Talk to My Child about Drugs) in *Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention*. It is available online at [www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com/publications](http://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com/publications).

# What You Can Do

**Understand** the power and danger of these medications. Many medications, particularly narcotic pain relievers (opioid medications), are very powerful and are designed to relieve extreme pain. New medications are continually being approved for medical use, and it is important to be informed about the drugs' uses and properties.

**Follow** disposal guidelines. Read DEA's flier on how to properly dispose of unused medicines, which is available online at <https://go.usa.gov/xQWgd>.

**Ask** your doctor, dentist, and pharmacist about the medications you are prescribed. Ask about their side effects, interactions, and potential for addiction.

**Review** what is in your medicine cabinet. Lock up medications in a safe place, not in the family medicine or kitchen cabinet. Count your pills when you receive them, and periodically check to see how many are in the container. Avoid keeping prescription painkillers or sedatives around "just in case."

**Read** the labels. The prescription label includes important information about how much to take; interactions with food and beverages, supplements, and other drugs; ingredients; and possible side effects. Many generic prescriptions are substituted for brand name drugs. Usually, the generic name of the drug is printed with the brand name, so that the customer knows which medication they receive. It may be easy to overlook the fact that the doctor has prescribed a very powerful narcotic painkiller.

**Remember:** Use of prescription medicines without a doctor's recommendation can be just as dangerous as using illegal drugs. Improper use can have serious health effects, including addiction and overdose.



## DEA's Role

### **DEA plays a critical role in preventing prescription drug misuse.**

DEA investigates physicians who sell prescriptions to drug dealers or who overprescribe drugs; pharmacists who falsify records and then sell the drugs; employees who steal from drug inventory; executives who falsify orders to cover illicit sales; prescription forgers; and persons who commit armed robbery of pharmacies and drug distributors.

DEA investigates illegal internet pharmacies. Rogue pharmacies exist to profit from the sale of controlled prescription medications to buyers who have not seen a doctor and do not have a prescription from a registered physician. The pharmacies lack quality assurance and accountability, and their products pose a danger to buyers.

DEA works with state, local, and foreign partners to interdict controlled substances and chemicals used to make drugs.

DEA's authority to enforce laws and regulations comes from the Controlled Substances Act, Title 21 of the United States Code. DEA also provides fact-based timely information to the public about the dangers of illegal drugs and the non-medical use of prescription drugs through publications, websites, and presentations.

## { RESOURCES }



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Prescription Drug Overdose – [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose)

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) – [www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)

Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) Online Opioid Lesson – [www.dare.org/d-a-r-e-online-opioid-lesson](http://www.dare.org/d-a-r-e-online-opioid-lesson)

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) – [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov)

DEA Office of Diversion Control – [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov)

DEA's website for colleges and universities – [www.campusdrugprevention.gov](http://www.campusdrugprevention.gov)

DEA's website for parents, caregivers, and educators – [www.GetSmartAboutDrugs.com](http://www.GetSmartAboutDrugs.com)

DEA's website for teens – [www.justthinktwice.com](http://www.justthinktwice.com)

Institute for Behavior and Health – [www.stopdruggeddriving.org](http://www.stopdruggeddriving.org)

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) – [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens – [www.teens.drugabuse.gov](http://www.teens.drugabuse.gov)

National Library of Medicine – [www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov) (Spanish version: [www.medlineplus.gov/spanish](http://www.medlineplus.gov/spanish))

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org); 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) – [www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/)

Partnership for Drug-Free Kids – [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

Stop Medicine Abuse – [www.stopmedicineabuse.org](http://www.stopmedicineabuse.org)









*GetSmartAboutDrugs*  
A DEA Resource for Parents

[www.GetSmartAboutDrugs.com](http://www.GetSmartAboutDrugs.com)  
[www.JustThinkTwice.com](http://www.JustThinkTwice.com)

[www.OperationPrevention.com](http://www.OperationPrevention.com)  
[www.DEA.gov](http://www.DEA.gov)