



Taking ACTION to prevent & address PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE



EDUCATE *before*
YOU MEDICATE
The NCPiE
Coalition-working
together to promote
safe medicine use
National Council on Patient Information and Education
www.talkaboutrx.org



A Resource Kit for America's College Campuses

Warning Signs & Symptoms of Prescription Drug Abuse

Because college students are frequently exposed to opportunities to experiment with, misuse and abuse so many different types of prescriptions drugs—from stimulants and pain relievers to anti-depressants and tranquilizers—it can be difficult to know what signs to watch for. Each medication has different effects, and mixing these drugs with alcohol and other drugs is very dangerous and can lead to permanent organ damage and even death.

Know the signs that might signal prescription drug abuse.

Physical Signs and Symptoms

Depending on the drug misused or abused you may notice the following.

Stimulants are prescribed to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or narcolepsy; these medications, which include **Adderall**, **Concerta** and **Ritalin** speed up brain activity causing increased alertness, attention, and energy that comes with elevated blood pressure, increased heart rate and breathing.

Hyperactivity

Shaking

Sweating

Dilated pupils

Fast or irregular heart beat

Elevated body temperature

Seizures

Paranoia/nervousness

Repetitive behaviors

Loss of appetite or sudden and unexplained weight loss

Sedatives/depressants are prescribed to treat anxiety, panic attacks and sleep disorders; these medications (**Valium**, **Xanax**, **Ambien** are examples) slow down or “depress” the functions of the brain and central nervous system.

Loss of coordination

Respiratory depression

Slowed reflexes

Slurred speech

Coma



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Opioid analgesics like **Vicodin**, **OxyContin** and **Percocet** are prescribed to treat moderate-to-severe pain; these medications can block pain messages from reaching the brain; they can also give someone a feeling of euphoria.

Sleep deprivation or “nodding”
Pinpoint/constricted pupils, watery or droopy eyes
Nausea, vomiting, constipation
Slow slurred speech

Slow gait
Dry skin, itching, skin infections
Constant flu-like symptoms
Track marks (bruised skin around injection site)

Behavioral Signs

Behavior changes may also include:

- Sudden mood changes, including irritability, negative attitude, personality change
- Extreme changes in groups of friends or hangout locations
- Forgetfulness or clumsiness
- Lying or being deceitful, skipping classes, avoiding eye contact
- Losing interest in personal appearance, extracurricular activities or sports
- “Munchies” or sudden changes in appetite
- Unusually poor performance in school, on the field, in debate club or other activities
- Borrowing money or having extra cash
- Acting especially angry or abusive, or engaging in reckless behavior

For more information, see Partnership for a Drug Free America's website on signs of drug abuse at <http://www.theantidrug.com/drug-information/otc-prescription-drug-abuse/signs-prescription-drug-abuse.aspx>.

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HELP IS AVAILABLE

If you suspect a friend, roommate or peer is abusing prescription drugs, there is help.

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)**

240-276-2750

www.csat.samhsa.gov

The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), promotes the quality and availability of community-based substance abuse treatment services for individuals and families who need them. CSAT works with States and community-based groups to improve and expand existing substance abuse treatment services under the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant Program. CSAT also supports SAMHSA's free treatment referral service to link people with the community-based substance abuse services they need.

SAMHSA's National Helpline

800-662-HELP (800-662-4357) (English and Spanish)

800-487-4889 (TDD)

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator:

800-662-HELP (800-662-4357) (English and Spanish)

www.samhsa.gov/treatment