

Prescription Drug Abuse

What is it?

Whether for chronic or acute conditions, medications are extremely useful to improving the lives of those in need. However, there is a growing trend among college students to use prescription medications for recreational or advantageous use. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), drug abuse occurs when medications prescribed by a doctor are, "taken by someone other than the patient for whom the medication was prescribed, or taken in a manner or dosage other than what was prescribed". While many feel these pills are harmless, it is important to remember that these medications are prescribed by professionals for specific use to produce specific results. The three most common types of abused drugs are: stimulants (used to treat ADHD or narcolepsy), central nervous system depressants (used to treat anxiety), and opioids (used to treat pain). Read on to learn the risks associated with their use.

Stimulants

Examples: Adderall, Ritalin, Concerta

Form Taken: Ingested, snorted, or injected.

Effects: Increase alertness, attention, and energy. Addictive.

Dangers: Increase blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, and blood glucose. Seizures, hostility, or paranoia.

Classification: Schedule II drugs

Misuse Penalties: First Offense: 5-40 years imprisonment and/or no more than \$2M fine.

Depressants

Examples: Valium, Xanax, Ambien.

Form Taken: Ingested

Effects: Increase GABA in the brain, decreases brain activity producing calming effect. Addictive.

Dangers: Drowsiness, slowed respiration and heart rate. Seizures common in withdrawal.

Classification: Schedule IV drugs

Misuse Penalties: First Offense: ≥3 years imprisonment and/or \$250K fine.

Opioids

Examples: Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet.

Form Taken: Ingested, snorted, or injected.

Effects: Affects regions of the brain that trigger euphoria. Addictive.

Dangers: Drowsiness, constipation, slowed breathing; High doses may result in respiratory depression or death.

Classification: Schedule II, III drugs

Misuse Penalties: First Offense: ≥5 years imprisonment and/or \$250K fine (Sch. III).