

What is Prescription Drug Abuse?

Prescription drug abuse is when a person takes medications for reasons or in ways or amounts not intended by their doctor. If you are taking more medicine than your doctor instructed, taking medicine when it is not needed or taking the medicine with alcohol or other drugs, you are abusing your prescription drugs. Sharing your prescriptions with someone else or taking medication prescribed for someone else is also prescription drug abuse. Never give your medicine to friends or family.

Doctors prescribe medicines based on a person's specific symptoms and medical history. A medicine that works for you could be dangerous for someone else. Most prescription drugs are safe and effective when you take them as your doctor directs but abusing prescriptions can lead to serious problems such as addiction, drug interactions or overdose. Abuse of prescription drugs may result in termination of services by your doctor and his or her practice.

What Drugs Are Most Commonly Abused?

The most commonly abused prescription drugs include:

- Opioids (used to control pain) include medicines such as oxycodone (OxyContin), oxycodone combined with acetaminophen (Percocet) and hydrocodone combined with acetaminophen (Vicodin). Other opioids include: opium, codeine, fentanyl, heroin, hydromorphone, methadone, morphine, oxycodone, paregoric, sufentanil and tramadol.
- Benzodiazepines (used to treat anxiety, panic attacks and sleep disorders) include diazepam (Valium), alprazolam (Xanax), clonazepam (Klonopin) and lorazepam (Ativan).
- Stimulants (used to treat ADHD and narcolepsy) include dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine), methylphenidate (Ritalin and Concerta), and amphetamines (Adderall).

How Should Prescription Medications be Disposed of When No Longer Needed?

Don't flush expired or unwanted prescription drugs down the toilet or drain unless the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs you to do so. Do return unwanted or expired prescription drugs to a drug take back program – call your city or county government's household trash and recycling service to ask if a drug take-back program is available in your community.

If a community drug take back program isn't available, follow the steps listed below:

- Take your prescription drugs out of their original containers
- Mix drugs (do NOT crush tablets or capsules) with an undesirable substance, like cat litter or used coffee grounds.
- Put the mixture into a disposable container with a lid, like an empty margarine tub or a sealable bag, and throw that container in your household trash.
- Before throwing out your empty pill bottle or other empty medicine packaging, remember to remove all instructions and personal information.



How Should Commonly Abused Prescriptions be Stored?

These medications should not be stored in the family's medicine cabinet. They should be stored in their original packaging inside a locked cabinet or location that is not easily accessible to others. Carefully track when you take your medicine and how much of it is left. If you think that someone has taken some of your medicine, contact the police. When medicines are no longer needed, it is important to dispose of them properly so they aren't abused or misused by accident.

Sources:

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/prescription-drugs>
<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/drugs-procedures-devices/prescription-medicines/safeuse.html>
<http://www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm101653.htm>
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