

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS



APRIL 2014

Trends and Risks of Prescription Drug Abuse

Taking prescription drugs not prescribed for you by a doctor or in a way that hasn't been recommended by a doctor, can be more dangerous than you think.

Prescription drugs are the third most commonly abused category of drugs, behind alcohol and marijuana and ahead of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. Some prescription drugs can become addictive, especially when used in a manner inconsistent with their labeling by someone other than the patient for whom they were prescribed, or when taken in a manner or dosage other than prescribed. Overall, an estimated 48 million people have abused prescription drugs, representing nearly 20% of the U.S. population.

Alarming Trends in Prescription Drug Use

Although prescription drug abuse affects many people, some concerning trends can be seen among older adults, adolescents and women.

Seniors and Elderly: Seniors and the elderly are at significant risk for prescription drug abuse in which they intentionally or unintentionally take too much medication or medications that are not medically necessary. A large percentage of older adults also use over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements, sometimes in combination with alcohol, increasing the potential for negative drug interactions and cognitive impairment.

Adolescents/Teens: The non-medical use of prescription drugs has been rising steadily for adolescents, particularly with prescription pain relievers, anti-anxiety medications, stimulants and steroids. With a greater number of prescriptions being written, such drugs are more widely available (including parents' prescriptions) and adolescents may believe that such drugs are safer than street drugs. The possible combination with alcohol significantly increases the risk of accidental overdose.

Young Women: Men and women have similar rates of prescription drug abuse, though an exception is found among 12- to 17-year-olds. In this age group, young women are more likely than men to misuse psychotherapeutic drugs. Research has shown that women are at increased risk for non-medical use of painkillers and tranquilizers.

People of all ages abuse prescription drugs for a number of reasons, including:

- To feel good or get high
- To relax or relieve tension
- To reduce appetite
- To experiment
- To be accepted by peers or to be social
- To feed an addiction

Recognizing prescription drug abuse, symptoms include:

- Stealing, forging or selling prescriptions
- Taking higher doses than prescribed
- Excessive mood swings
- Increase or decrease in sleep

- Poor decision-making
- Appearing to be high, unusually energetic or revved up, or sedated
- Continually "losing" prescriptions, so more prescriptions must be written
- Seeking prescriptions from more than one doctor

Treatment and Recovery From Prescription Drug Addiction

Addiction to any drug is a disease that, like other chronic diseases, can be treated. In fact, millions of people are managing their disease and living in long-term recovery. No single type of treatment is appropriate for all individuals addicted to prescription drugs. Treatment takes into account the type of drug used and the needs of the individual and may need to incorporate detoxification, counseling, or mutual aid/self-help and recovery support.

If you are having problems with prescription drug use or you are concerned about a family member or friend, seek help from medical professionals in your area or call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 800.327.4692.

<http://www.ncadd.org/index.php/learn-about-drugs/prescription-drugs>

For related articles and support, visit your Better Living web resource at www.efr.org/myeap. To access EAP services, call 800.327.4692 or TTY 877.542.6488.



EFR EMPLOYEE & FAMILY RESOURCES

1964 • Celebrating 50 Years • 2014

THIS NEWSLETTER IS PROVIDED BY YOUR EMPLOYER IN COOPERATION WITH YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) BECAUSE WE CARE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.