

Prescription Drugs – Healers & Killers

There's hordes of scary information everywhere about the effects of street drugs on the young children and adolescents of every country, including the devastation of addiction. Today, there's a much quieter assault on our families that may prove to be worse than most of the usual street drugs. This addiction is to prescription drugs and they are commonly used in deadly quantities and mixtures at parties (for adults) and raves or concerts (for teens).

The abuse and addiction from the non-medical use of prescription drugs is a very serious public health concern. When abused alone, or taken with other drugs, prescription pain relievers can kill you. There it is in simple language...abuse pain meds or combine them with other drugs or alcohol and you just might die. The death rate from this abuse and misuse is rising at an alarming rate for both adolescents and adults.

If you don't drop dead from inappropriately using these drugs, the ensuing addiction to pain relievers can leave you with brain damage. Even using prescription pain relievers with other prescription drugs (such as antidepressants) or over-the-counter medications (like cough syrups and antihistamines), can lead to life-threatening respiratory failure.

Opioids are the most dangerous prescription pain relievers all by themselves, particularly those containing drugs such as morphine and codeine. Party-goers, young or old, dropping pills at parties are also dropping dead at an alarming rate. We're not even discussing addiction here...with some prescription pain relievers, one pill is all it takes!

Drugs To Watch Out For:

There are three classes of prescription drugs that are most commonly abused:

- * **Opioids**, which are most often prescribed to treat pain, such as Codeine, Darvon, Demerol, Dilaudid, Morphine (Kadian and Avinza) Oxycodone (OxyContin and Percocet), OxyContin, Tylenol with Codeine, and Vicodin
- * **Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants**, which are used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders; examples include: barbiturates (Mebaral and Nembutal) and benzodiazepines (Valium and Xanax)
- * **Stimulants**, which are prescribed to treat the sleep disorder narcolepsy, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and

obesity; examples include: dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine and Adderall), methylphenidate (Ritalin and Concerta).

Opioids Effects:

Opioids act on the brain and body by attaching to specific proteins called opioid receptors, which are found in the brain, spinal cord, and gastrointestinal tract. These drugs block the perception of pain and can produce drowsiness, nausea, constipation and, if a large single dose is taken, they can depress your respiration (you simply stop breathing).

Addiction to drugs of this type comes with long-term use. They should not be used with other substances that depress the Central Nervous System, such as alcohol, antihistamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, or general anesthetics, because these combinations increase the risk of serious life-threatening respiratory depression.

Central Nervous System Effects:

Sedatives and tranquilizers are Central Nervous System (brain and spinal cord) depressants and they can slow normal brain function. Long-term use will require larger doses to achieve the original effects. The larger doses lead to addiction and, when use is stopped, the brain's activity can rebound and race out of control, potentially leading to seizures and other harmful consequences. Using any CNS depressants with any other drugs, particularly alcohol, can slow both the heart and respiration, causing death.

Stimulant Effects:

Stimulants increase alertness, attention, and energy, as well as elevate blood pressure and increase heart rate and respiration. Historically used to treat asthma and other respiratory problems, obesity, neurological disorders, and a variety of other ailments, their potential for abuse and addiction became apparent.

Some stimulants, such as Dexedrine, Adderall, Ritalin and Concerta, have chemical structures similar to a family of key brain neurotransmitters called monoamines, which include norepinephrine and dopamine. Stimulants enhance the effects of these chemicals in the brain, increasing blood pressure and heart rate, constricting blood vessels, increasing blood glucose, and opening up the pathways of the respiratory system. The increase in dopamine increases a sense of pleasure and that can become an emotional addiction along with a physical drug addiction.

It is possible for individuals abusing these drugs to become addicted to many stimulants. Repeated use of some stimulants over a short period can lead to feelings of hostility or paranoia. Further, taking high doses of a stimulant may result in dangerously high body temperature and an irregular

heartbeat. There is also the potential for cardiovascular failure or lethal seizures.

Stimulants should be used in combination with other medications only under a physician's supervision. Patients also should be aware of the dangers associated with mixing stimulants and OTC cold medicines that contain decongestants; combining these substances may cause blood pressure to become dangerously high or lead to irregular heart rhythms.

Street Names:

AC/DC, Backwards, Barbies, Beans, Blockbusters, Blue (Angels, Bullets, Chorals, Christmas Rolls, Clouds, Coral, Devil, Dolls, Heaven, Tips) Coties, Demmies, Dillies, Hillbilly Heroin, O.C., Oxy, Oxycotton, Percs and Vics to name a few.

Whatever you call them, remember one thing - they can all be killers.

Symptoms of Overdose:

- Slow breathing (less than ten breaths a minute is really serious trouble)
- Small, pinpoint pupils
- Confusion
- Being tired, nodding off, or passing out
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Apathy (they don't care about anything)
- Cold and clammy skin
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Seizures

A lot of these symptoms can imitate drunkenness or intoxication. Do not be tempted to let your friend sleep it off, or tell their parents they had too much to drink. Your friend could go to sleep and never wake up.

Think about what you are doing - you only die once!

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