



# 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](http://www.talkaboutrx.org)



## A Resource Kit for America's College Campuses

### Before We Go Any Farther...

#### You Need to Know about Prescription Drug Abuse

*Have you ever used a friend's prescription painkiller to get rid of a headache? Or taken a prescription stimulant to help you study the night before an exam? What about experimenting with someone else's prescription medication to get high or feel good?*

*If so, you've misused or abused prescription drugs, maybe without even knowing it.*

“Misusing pain relievers and sedatives will only mask your problems, not solve them.”

- 1. While alcohol abuse and binge drinking still top the list of substance abuse issues on college campuses, the medical use of prescription drugs**—most notably stimulants (for example, Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin), sedatives (for example, Xanax and Valium) and pain relievers (for example, Percocet, Vicodin, OxyContin)—**is a growing, yet unaddressed problem.** Some of your peers abuse prescription medications to feel good or get high, but plenty of others turn to these medications to help reduce the stress and anxiety of college life, boost their mood, stay up all night writing a term paper or increase their stamina while playing sports.
- 2. Don't add prescription drugs to your repertoire of coping skills.** Using stimulants to “get in the zone” and try to improve academic performance is not only dangerous, experts say doing so won't improve your grades over time. But you will put your future at risk. Misusing pain relievers and sedatives will only mask your problems, not solve them.
- 3. Misusing or abusing prescription drugs is just plain dangerous and can even be deadly.** Taking these medications without a prescription or medical supervision of the risks—even once—can lead to serious problems, such as overdose and even death, especially if they are mixed with alcohol, marijuana and other drugs. That's because these substances have synergistic effects—for example prescription pain relievers and alcohol both slow breathing; as a result, you can literally stop breathing by ingesting too much of both.

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- 4. It's a slippery slope.** Research shows that students who take prescription drugs for non-medical reasons are at least five times more likely to develop a drug abuse problem than students who don't (McCabe, 2008). Just because these medications are FDA approved, does NOT mean they are safe to misuse.
- 5. Be in the majority.** Although prescription drug abuse is a big concern that puts young lives at risk, it's important to remember that not everyone is doing it. Most college students know it's not worth the risk to misuse or abuse prescription medications.
- 6. Lock them up.** Most college students get prescription medications from friends or family members either by asking for or stealing them. If you've been prescribed medication by your doctor, take it as directed, keep it in a safe and secure place and don't be pressured into sharing it with friends or family. You could put your friends' health at risk if you share your medications and it might be **illegal to boot**. That's because taking certain medications, many of which are considered controlled substances, without a doctor's prescription or misusing someone else's prescription is illegal. Only a doctor or pharmacist can legally give you these medications.

“When used the right way and under a doctor's supervision, prescription drugs are safe and effective in treating countless medical conditions.”

Don't screw up your future. Think twice before you take someone else's prescription meds and don't share your medication with others. For more information about the dangers of prescription drug abuse and steps you can take to help raise awareness on your campus, visit [www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org).

### HELP IS AVAILABLE

If you overhear a friend, roommate or teammate talking about misusing or abusing prescription drugs either to get high or feel good or help manage everyday stressors, talk to him or her. It's important to get help before things spiral out of control. Try to lend your support and urge them to get help before things spiral out of control.

Consult your resident assistant, college student health services, a family doctor or find a local treatment center by visiting the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) online treatment center locator at [www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov) or calling the National Helpline at 800-662-HELP (800-662-4357) (English and Spanish).