



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



A Resource Kit for America's College Campuses

Prescription Drug Abuse on America's College Campuses

Key Messages to Educate and Promote Action

The following information can help you educate your peers about the dangers of misusing and abusing prescription medications. As with any health education campaign, it is important that these messages be communicated consistently and repeatedly across a variety of campus activities in order for your peers to understand, remember and act on the information. Not all key or supporting messages should be included in every communications effort.

KEY MESSAGES

- ✓ The misuse and abuse of prescription medications, especially stimulants, sedatives and pain relievers, is a serious and often unaddressed problem on most college campuses.
- ✓ Misusing or abusing prescription drugs is dangerous and even deadly.
- ✓ Prescription drug abuse is not the norm and it can jeopardize your future.
- ✓ It's illegal to share your medications with friends or be in possession of someone else's prescription, regardless of the reason. You can be convicted as a drug dealer.
- ✓ Know when to seek help. Take steps to prevent your medications from falling into the wrong hands.

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SUPPORTING MESSAGES AND DATA FOR EACH KEY MESSAGE

The misuse and abuse of prescription medications, especially stimulants, sedatives and pain relievers, is a serious and often unaddressed problem on most college campuses.

Those who take prescription drugs for non-medical reasons are at least five times more likely to meet the definition of having a drug abuse problem than students who don't.

- While alcohol consumption and binge drinking remains one of the leading health problems on college campuses, many students also misuse or abuse prescription medications to try to enhance their academic performance, cope with stress or simply to get high.
- About one in four people aged 18 to 20 report using these medications nonmedically at least once in their lives (NSDUH, 2008).
- Most college students get these medications from friends or family members either by asking for or stealing them, buying or trading them. By students' sophomore year in college, about half of their classmates will have been offered the opportunity to abuse a prescription drug (Arria, 2008).

Misusing or abusing prescription drugs is dangerous and even deadly.

- Just because these medications are FDA approved, doesn't mean they are safe to misuse. They aren't any safer to abuse than illicit drugs.
- Regardless of why you use them, taking medications without a prescription or medical oversight of the risks can lead to addiction, overdose and even death.
- Taking prescription stimulants (Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin), pain relievers (Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet, methadone) and sedatives/tranquilizers (Valium, Xanax, Ativan, Klonopin, Ambien) together or mixing them with other drugs or alcohol can result in permanent organ damage, overdose and death. You could have a seizure or end up in the hospital with serious health problems such as respiratory failure (slow, shallow breathing)—between 2004 and 2008, there were more than 435,000 visits to the hospital related to prescription drug abuse, according to the Drug Abuse Warning Network.

Before we go any further, let's set the record straight: Prescription drug abuse is not the norm and it can jeopardize your future.

- 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.
- Those who take prescription drugs for non-medical reasons are at least five times more likely to meet the definition of having a drug abuse problem than students who don't (McCabe, 2008).

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- Taking stimulants to boost academic performance doesn't result in better grades, but it does put your long-term health at risk (NIDA, 2009).
- Misusing pain relievers and sedatives will only mask your problems, not solve them.

It's illegal to share certain medications with friends or be in possession of someone else's prescription, regardless of the reason. You can be convicted as a drug dealer.

- Even if it's well intentioned, it's illegal to take a controlled prescription medicine that is not prescribed for you.

Take Action: Know when to seek help. Take steps to prevent your medications from falling into the wrong hands.

- If you've been prescribed medication by your doctor, take it as directed, keep it in a safe, 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 doing so is illegal.
- Don't save unused medication for a rainy day. Dispose of old or unused medications so it can't be stolen. For more information, visit the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) web site at <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm>.
- If you or someone you know is abusing prescription medications, get help before things spiral out of control.
 - If you think you have a problem, 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 online treatment center locator at www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov.
 - If you know someone who has a problem, talk to them about the dangers and urge them to seek help.

REMEMBER THE 3 Rs FOR SAFE MEDICINE USE

Respect the power of medicine and use it properly.

Recognize that all medicines, including prescription drugs, have risks along with benefits. The risks tend to increase dramatically when medicines are abused.

Take **responsibility** for learning how to take prescription drugs safely and appropriately. Seek help at the first sign of your own or a friend's problem. Contact or visit your college health center if you have questions or need advice.