



## DRUGS FACT SHEET

### Over-the-Counter

### Prescription Drugs

- Prescription drugs and over-the-counter drugs can be misused and abused when the doctor's directions or label directions are not followed.
- Taking a larger than recommended dosage will NOT get you well quicker.
- Such misuse can lead to dangerous consequences including overdose and death.
- Distributing drugs, even prescription drugs, is considered drug dealing and is illegal.
- It is illegal to share your prescription medication or sell it to anyone else.

There are three classes of prescription drugs and medications that are most commonly abused or misused: 1) Opioids (pronounced *oh-pee-oids*), 2) Depressants, and 3) Stimulants.

**Opioids** – are prescribed to treat pain (Examples: morphine, Oxycontin, Percocet).

- When taken as prescribed, opioids safely and effectively manage pain and rarely cause addiction. Long-term use, however, can lead to physical dependence and addiction.
- Taking a large single dose of an opioid can cause severe respiratory depression and/or death.
- If you take opioids, always consult your doctor before taking any other type of medication. If opioids are taken with other drugs or medications, the combination could lead to life-threatening respiratory depression.

**Depressants** – are used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders (Examples: Valium, Xanax).

- Central nervous system depressants cause neurotransmitters in the brain to activate which produces a drowsy or calming effect on the person.
- These drugs have the potential for abuse and should be used only as prescribed. Long-term use of these drugs can cause the body to develop tolerance.
- Consult your doctor before using any other medications. Depressants should not be combined with any other medications that cause sleepiness (including over-the-counter cold and allergy medications or alcohol). This combination can slow breathing, heart rate and respiration, which can be fatal.

**Stimulants** – are prescribed to treat narcolepsy (a sleep disorder), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and clinical depression (Examples: Adderall, Ritalin).

- When taken as prescribed these drugs work well and are not addictive.
- Stimulants should be used with other medications **only** under a doctor's supervision.
- Taking high doses of stimulants can cause hostility, feelings of paranoia, irregular heartbeat, dangerously high body temperatures, cardiovascular failure or seizures.

**REFERENCES:**

<http://www.nida.nih.gov/Researchreports/Prescription/prescription2.html#What>  
<http://www.nida.nih.gov/Researchreports/Prescription/prescription3.html#CNS>  
<http://www.nida.nih.gov/Researchreports/Prescription/prescription4.html#Stimulants>