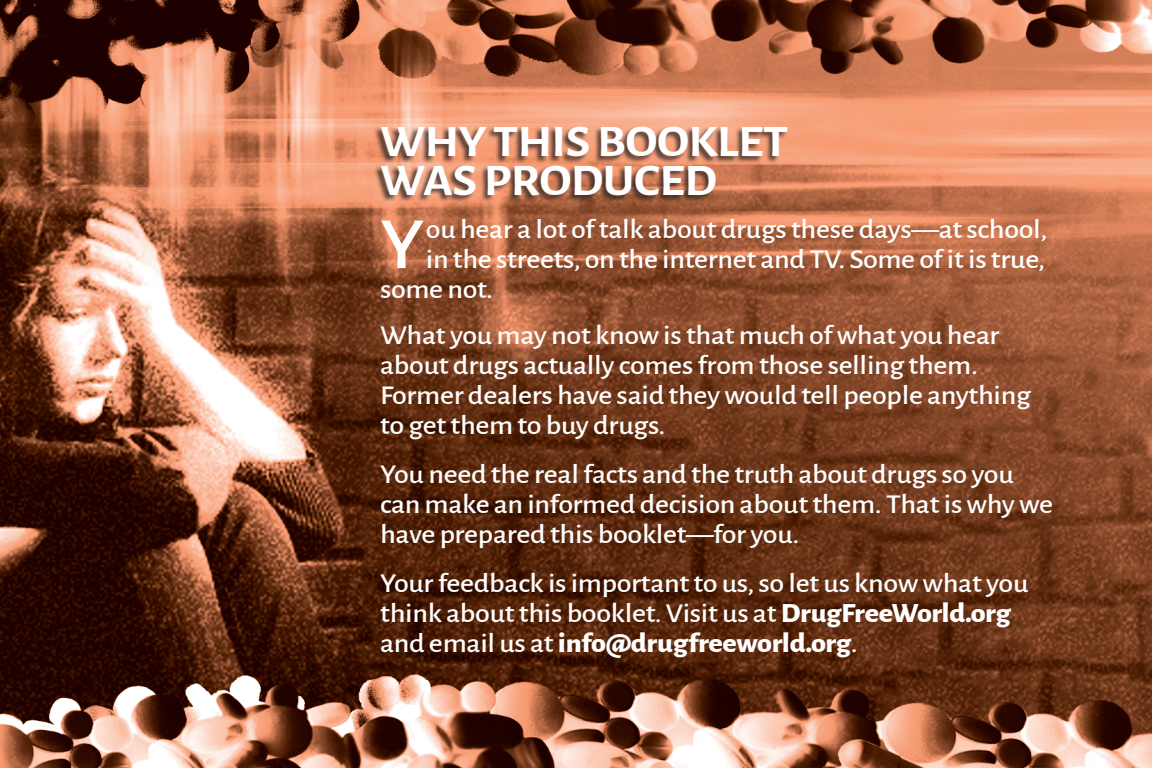

Rx
THE TRUTH ABOUT
PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE
Black Beauties
Yellows
Reds
Downers
Demmies
Candy
drugfreeworld.org



WHY THIS BOOKLET WAS PRODUCED

You hear a lot of talk about drugs these days—at school, in the streets, on the internet and TV. Some of it is true, some not.

What you may not know is that much of what you hear about drugs actually comes from those selling them. Former dealers have said they would tell people anything to get them to buy drugs.

You need the real facts and the truth about drugs so you can make an informed decision about them. That is why we have prepared this booklet—for you.

Your feedback is important to us, so let us know what you think about this booklet. Visit us at **DrugFreeWorld.org** and email us at **info@drugfreeworld.org**.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE
A SERIOUS PROBLEM

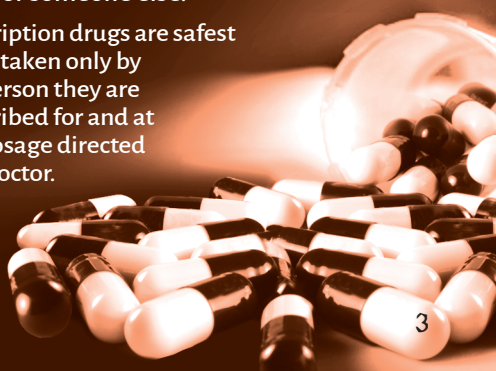
Recreational use of prescription drugs is a serious problem with teens and young adults. National studies show that a teen is more likely to have abused a prescription drug than an illegal street drug.

Many teens believe prescription drugs are safe because doctors prescribe them. However, taking drugs for nonmedical reasons to get high or self-medicate can be just as dangerous and addictive as using illegal street drugs.

There are significant health risks in taking prescription drugs without medical supervision. This is why these drugs should only be taken under a doctor's care and closely monitored to prevent addiction or other issues.

It is very dangerous to take a pill that was not prescribed specifically for you. People can react differently to drugs due to differences in their body chemistry and existing health conditions. A drug that is safe for one person could be harmful or even fatal for someone else.

Prescription drugs are safest when taken only by the person they are prescribed for and at the dosage directed by a doctor.



PRESCRIPTION DRUGS
WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

Because of their potential for abuse and addiction, many prescription drugs are classified by the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in the same category as opium, heroin and cocaine. This includes stimulants like Ritalin and Dexedrine and painkillers like OxyContin, Demerol and Roxicodone.

Some illegal street drugs were once used or prescribed by doctors or psychiatrists, but were later banned due to their harmful effects. Examples include heroin, cocaine, LSD and methamphetamine.

Abuse of prescription drugs can be even riskier than using illegal drugs. The high potency of some synthetic drugs, such as OxyContin, fentanyl and other opioids, increases the risk of overdose. Deaths from painkiller overdoses have increased to five times higher than they were at the turn of the century.

Many people don't realize that selling or distributing pharmaceutical drugs without authorization is illegal and carries severe penalties, including fines and jail time. If drug dealing results in death or serious injury, the dealer can face life in prison.

TYPES OF ABUSED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Prescription drugs taken recreationally fall into the following main categories:

1. **Depressants:** These drugs, also known as *central nervous system** *depressants*, slow brain function. They include sedatives (used to calm and induce drowsiness) and tranquilizers (used to reduce tension or anxiety).
2. **Opioids and morphine derivatives†:** Commonly known as *painkillers*, these drugs contain opium or similar substances and are used to relieve pain.
3. **Stimulants:** These drugs increase energy and alertness, but also raise blood pressure, heart rate and respiratory (breathing) rate.
4. **Antidepressants:** Mood-altering psychiatric drugs.



* central nervous system: the part of the body that contains the brain and spinal cord
† derivative: a chemical substance formed from a related substance

DEPRESSANTS

Sometimes called *downers*, depressants come in multicolored tablets and capsules or liquid form. Some, like Zyprexa, Seroquel and Haldol, are known as major tranquilizers or antipsychotics, and are used to reduce the symptoms of mental illness. Drugs called *benzos* (short for *benzodiazepines*),* such as Xanax, Klonopin, Halcion and Librium, are used for anxiety. Barbiturates like Amytal, Numbutal and Seconal act as sedatives and sleeping pills. Some of the well-known brand and street names are:

Brand Names	Street Names	Brand Names	Street Names
• Ativan	• Candy	• Amytal	• Barbs
• Halcion	• Downers	• Nembutal	• Phennies
• Klonopin	• Sleeping Pills	• Phenobarbital	• Red Birds
• Librium	• Tranks	• Seconal	• Reds
• Valium			• Tooies
• Xanax			• Yellow Jackets
			• Yellows

* benzodiazepine: a tranquilizer that acts to relax muscles and calm mental excitement

DEPRESSANTS SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

Short-term effects of depressants include:

- Slowed brain function
- Slowed pulse and breathing
- Lowered blood pressure
- Poor concentration
- Confusion
- Fatigue*
- Dizziness
- Slurred speech
- Fever
- Sluggishness
- Visual disturbances
- Dilated pupils
- Disorientation, lack of coordination
- Depression
- Difficulty urinating
- Addiction

Depressants can affect memory, judgment and coordination, and may lead to irritability, paranoia† and suicidal thoughts. Some users may become agitated or aggressive.

Combining sedatives—drugs used to calm or relax—with tranquilizers and other depressants like alcohol doubles or triples the drugs' effects. This severely slows breathing and heart rate, potentially leading to death.

* fatigue: extreme physical or mental tiredness
† paranoia: extreme and unreasonable suspicion, distrust or fear of other people without evidence or justification

DEPRESSANTS LONG-TERM EFFECTS

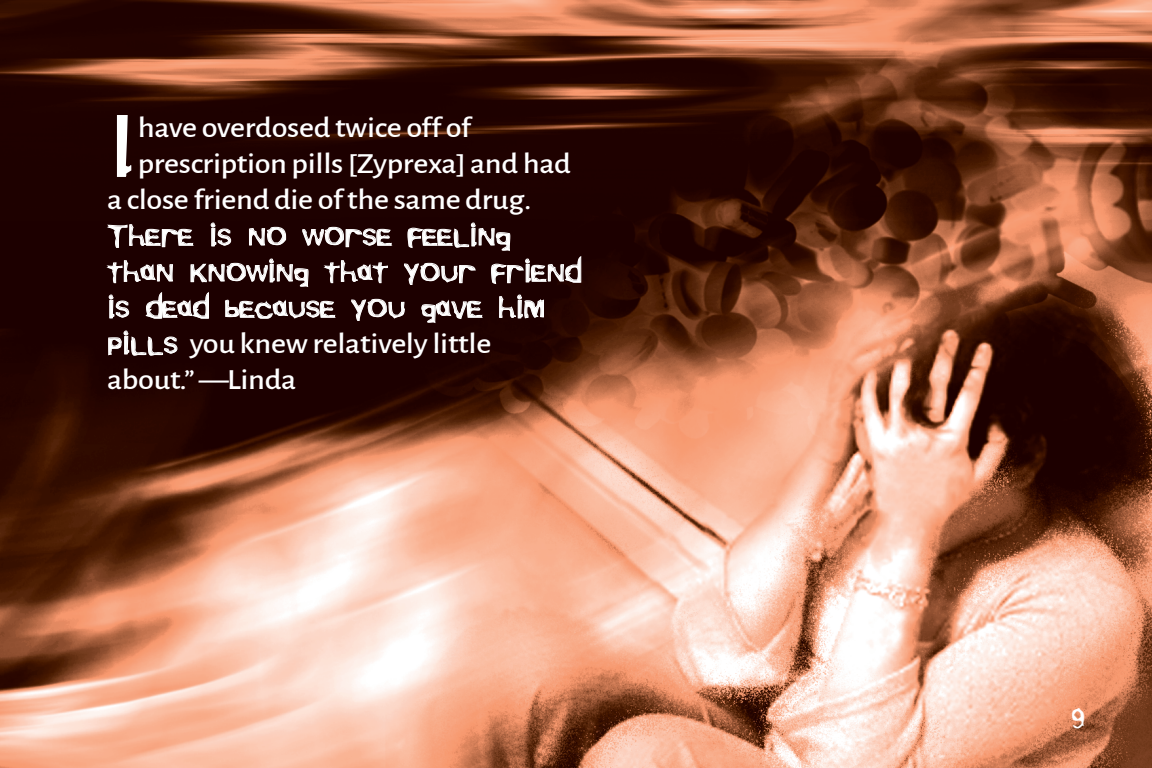
Tolerance to depressants can develop quickly, requiring higher doses for the same effect. This increases the risk of overdose, coma or death.

Long-term use of depressants can lead to chronic fatigue, breathing issues, depression, sexual problems and sleep problems. As dependence on the drug increases, cravings, anxiety or panic are common if the user is unable to get more.

Withdrawal from depressants can be life-threatening and include insomnia, weakness, nausea, agitation, high body temperature, delirium, hallucinations and convulsions.

Some antipsychotics can increase the risk of high blood sugar, diabetes and weight gain (instances of as much as 100 pounds gained have been reported).

A study from the National Institutes of Health found that the abuse of some antipsychotics is linked to serious heart problems that can lead to death.


I have overdosed twice off of prescription pills [Zyprexa] and had a close friend die of the same drug. THERE IS NO WORSE FEELING THAN KNOWING THAT YOUR FRIEND IS DEAD BECAUSE YOU GAVE HIM PILLS you knew relatively little about." —Linda

ROHYPNOL

Rohypnol is a tranquilizer about 10 times more potent than Valium. The drug is available as a white or olive-green pill and is usually sold in the manufacturer's bubble packaging. Users crush the pills and snort the powder, sprinkle it on marijuana and smoke it, dissolve it in a drink or inject it.



Brand Names

- Flunipam
- Hypnodorm
- Rohypnol

Street Names

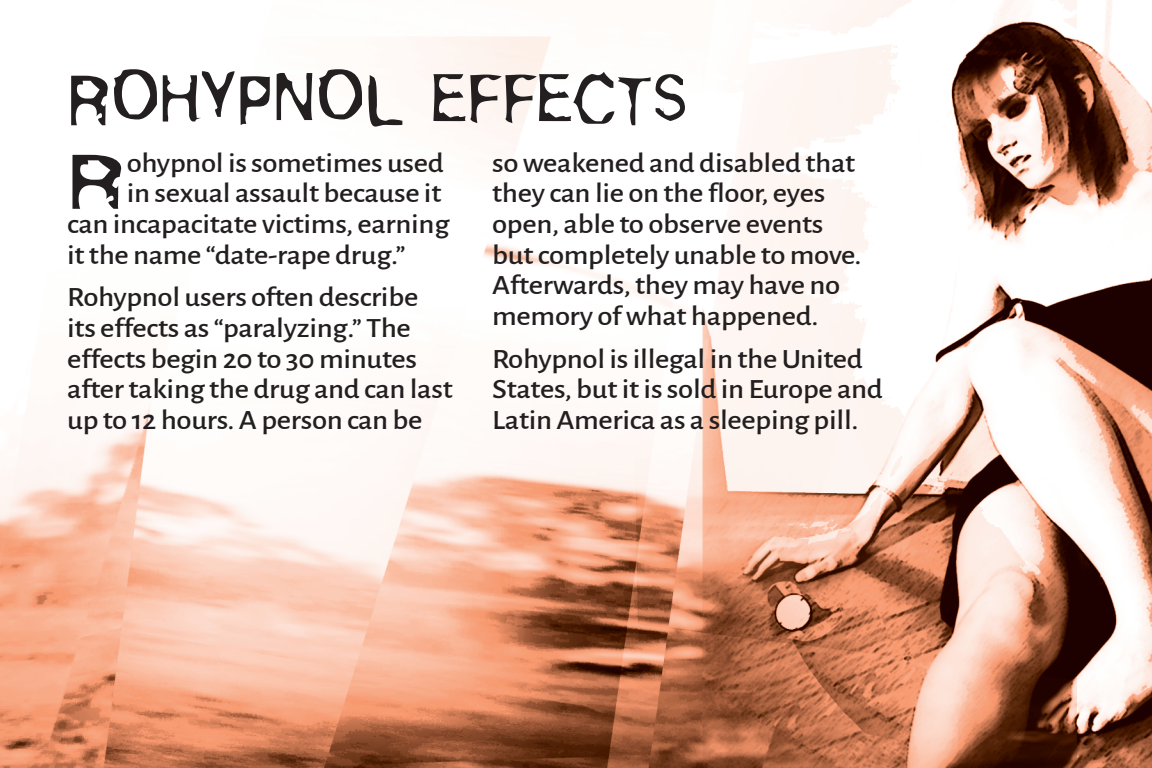
- Forget-Me Pill
- Mexican Valium
- R2
- Roche
- Roofies
- Rope
- Rophies

ROHYPNOL EFFECTS

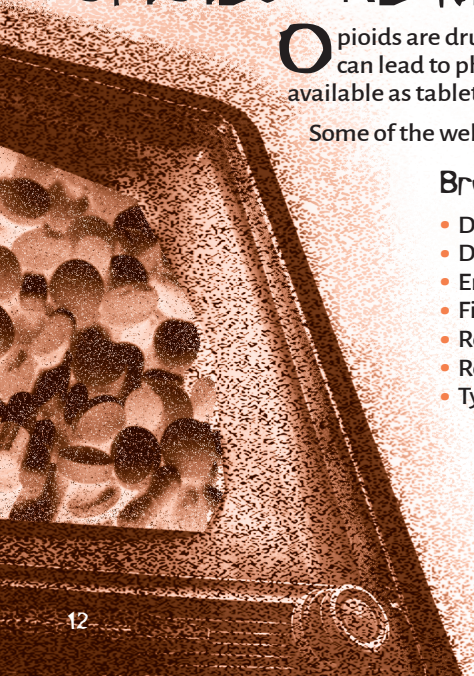
Rohypnol is sometimes used in sexual assault because it can incapacitate victims, earning it the name "date-rape drug."

Rohypnol users often describe its effects as "paralyzing." The effects begin 20 to 30 minutes after taking the drug and can last up to 12 hours. A person can be so weakened and disabled that they can lie on the floor, eyes open, able to observe events but completely unable to move. Afterwards, they may have no memory of what happened.

Rohypnol is illegal in the United States, but it is sold in Europe and Latin America as a sleeping pill.



Opioids and Morphine Derivatives



Opioids are drugs that act on the nervous system to relieve pain, but can lead to physical dependence and withdrawal symptoms. They are available as tablets, capsules, liquid or skin patches.

Some of the well-known brand and street names are:

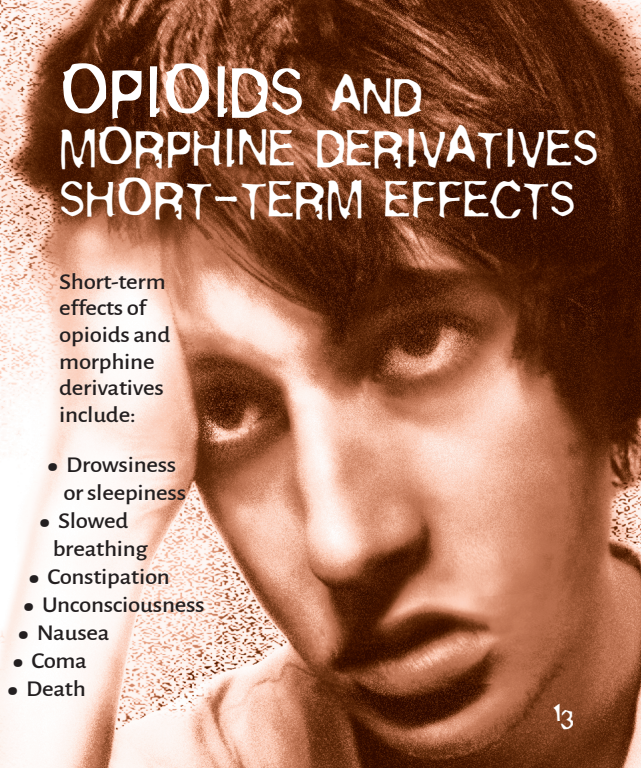
Brand Names

- Demerol
- Duramorph
- Empirin with Codeine
- Fiorinal with Codeine
- Robitussin AC
- Roxanol
- Tylenol with Codeine

Street Names

- Captain Cody
- Cody
- Demmies
- Doors & Fours
- Loads
- M
- Miss Emma
- Monkey
- Pain Killer
- Pancakes & Syrup
- Schoolboy
- White Stuff

Opioids and Morphine Derivatives Short-Term Effects



Brand Names

- Actiq
- Dilaudid
- Duragesic
- Hysingla
- Lorcet
- Lortab
- Norco
- OxyContin
- Percocet
- Percodan
- RoxyBond
- Sublimaze
- Tylox
- Xtampza
- Zohydro

Street Names

- Apache
- China Girl
- China White
- Dance Fever
- Dillies
- Friend
- Goodfella
- Hillbilly Heroin
- Jackpot
- Juice
- Murder 8
- Oxy 80
- Oxycat
- Percs
- Perks
- Tango & Cash
- TNT

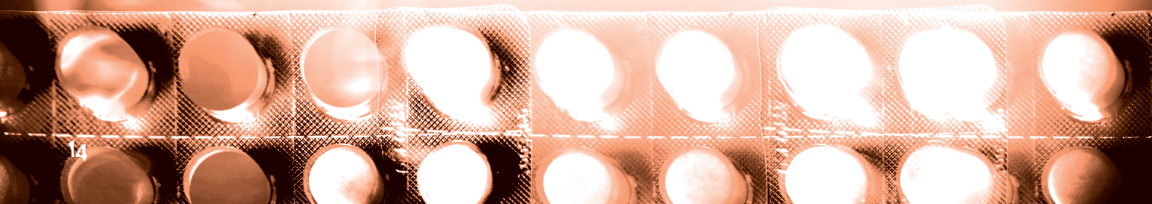
Short-term effects of opioids and morphine derivatives include:

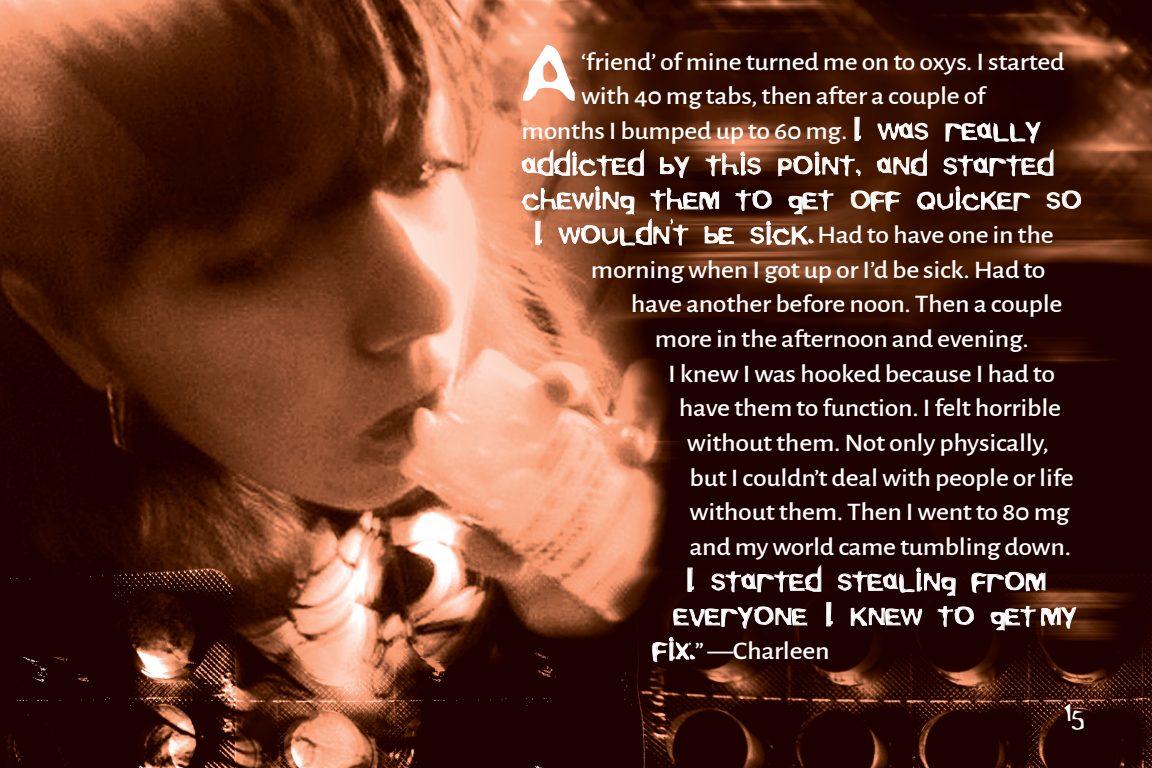
- Drowsiness or sleepiness
- Slowed breathing
- Constipation
- Unconsciousness
- Nausea
- Coma
- Death

OPIOIDS AND MORPHINE DERIVATIVES
LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Prolonged use or abuse of opioids can result in physical dependence and addiction. Withdrawal symptoms include restlessness, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting and cold flashes with goose bumps. Users may need larger doses to achieve the same high, increasing overdose risk.

For more information about the abuse of painkillers, see *The Truth About Painkillers* in this series of booklets.





A 'friend' of mine turned me on to oxys. I started with 40 mg tabs, then after a couple of months I bumped up to 60 mg. **I was really addicted by this point, and started chewing them to get off quicker so I wouldn't be sick.** Had to have one in the morning when I got up or I'd be sick. Had to have another before noon. Then a couple more in the afternoon and evening.

I knew I was hooked because I had to have them to function. I felt horrible without them. Not only physically, but I couldn't deal with people or life without them. Then I went to 80 mg and my world came tumbling down. **I started stealing from everyone I knew to get my fix.**" —Charleen

STIMULANTS

Stimulants, known as *uppers*, temporarily increase alertness and energy. Common examples include cocaine and amphetamines.

Prescription stimulants come in tablets or capsules and can be swallowed, injected in liquid form or crushed and snorted.

Some of the well-known brand and street names are:

Brand Names

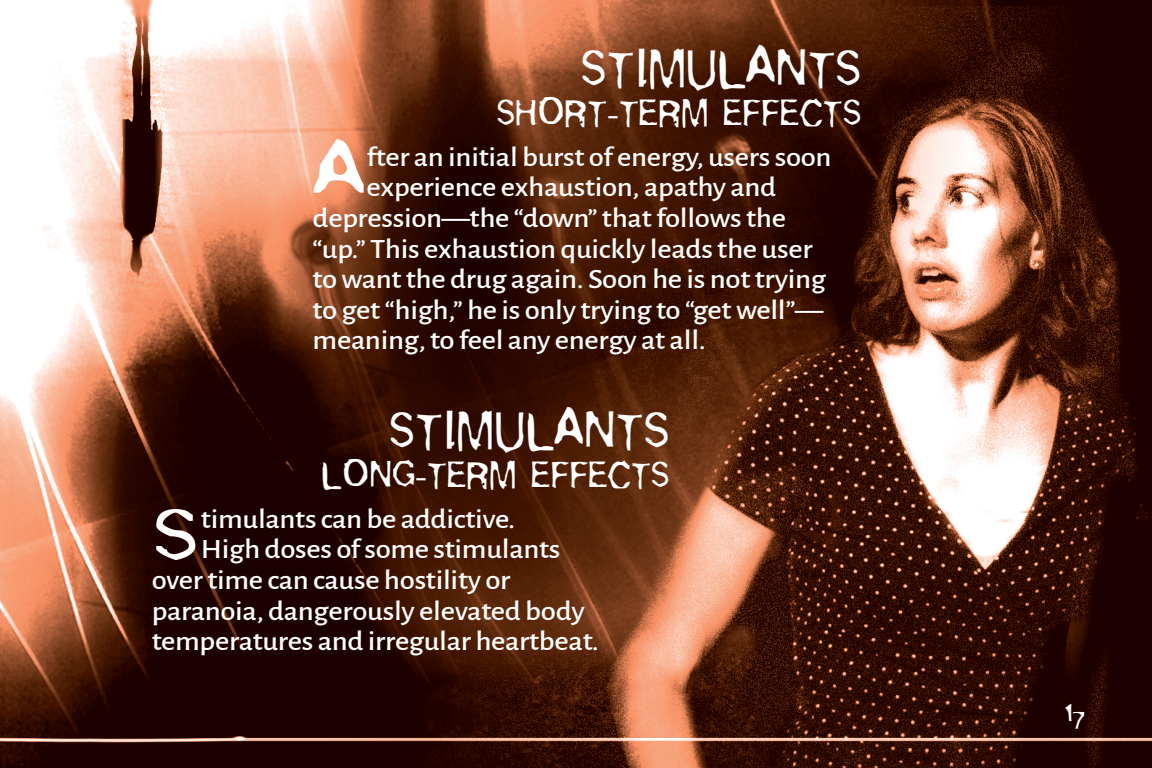
- Adderall
- Biphetamine
- Concerta
- Dexedrine
- Metadate
- Ritalin
- Vyvanse

Street Names

- Bennies
- Black Beauties
- Crosses
- Hearts
- Jif
- Kibbles and Bits
- LA Turnaround
- R-Ball
- Skippy
- Speed
- The Smart Drug
- Truck Drivers
- Uppers
- Vitamin R



For more information about the abuse of prescription stimulants, see *The Truth About Ritalin Abuse* in this series of booklets.



STIMULANTS
SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

After an initial burst of energy, users soon experience exhaustion, apathy and depression—the "down" that follows the "up." This exhaustion quickly leads the user to want the drug again. Soon he is not trying to get "high," he is only trying to "get well"—meaning, to feel any energy at all.

STIMULANTS
LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Stimulants can be addictive. High doses of some stimulants over time can cause hostility or paranoia, dangerously elevated body temperatures and irregular heartbeat.

ANTIDEPRESSANTS

Antidepressants include Prozac, Paxil, Celexa, Cymbalta, Zoloft, Effexor, Auvelity and Remeron. These drugs come in multicolored capsules and tablets.

Studies have shown that the effects of these drugs can include:

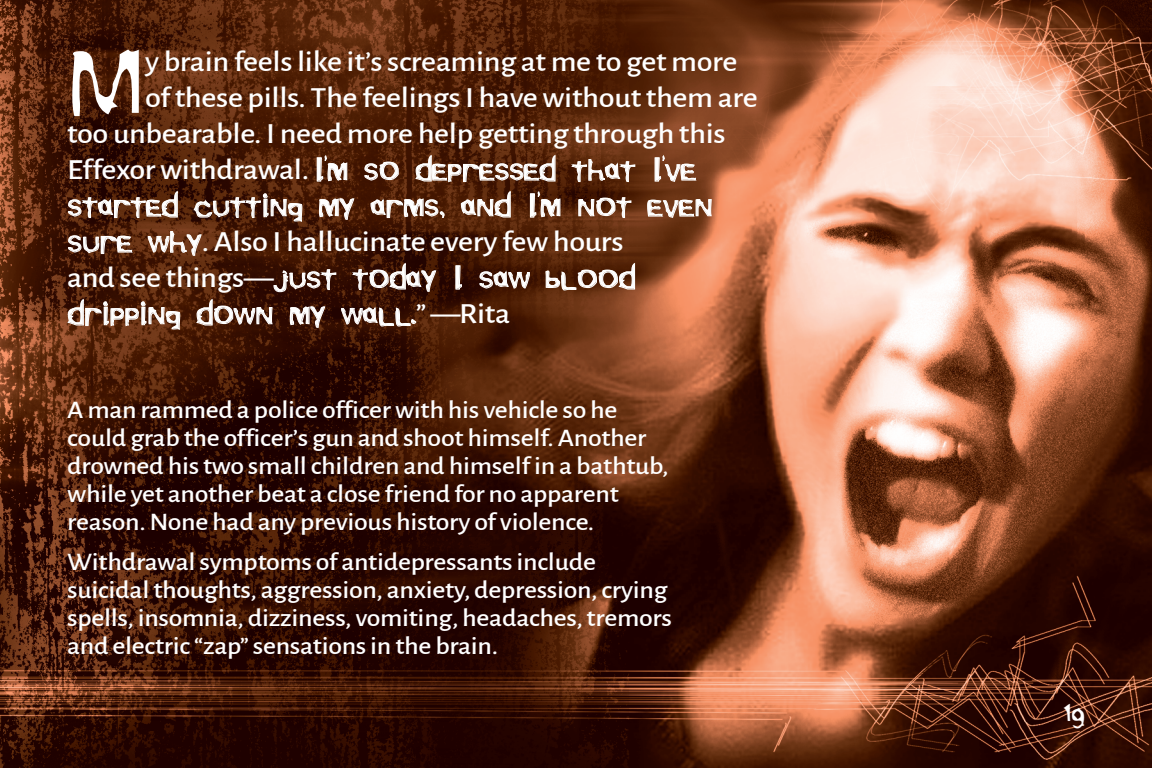
- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Nervousness and anxiety
- Violent thoughts and actions
- Agitation
- Suicidal thoughts or suicide
- Tremors
- Hostility
- Sweating
- Irregular heartbeat
- Aggression
- Criminal behavior
- Confusion and incoherent thoughts
- Paranoia
- Hallucinations
- Psychosis
- Akathisia*

Youth taking these drugs are twice as likely as adults to act aggressively. Studies have shown higher violent crime rates among young adults on these medications. Antidepressants can significantly increase the risk of suicide.

There are many examples of extreme and irrational behavior from individuals on these drugs.

One 12-year-old boy developed violent nightmares about killing his classmates, then getting shot himself. The dream continued to feel "very real" after awakening and he grew acutely suicidal until the drug was stopped.

* akathisia: a movement disorder that makes it impossible to sit or remain still due to an intense inner restlessness



My brain feels like it's screaming at me to get more of these pills. The feelings I have without them are too unbearable. I need more help getting through this Effexor withdrawal. I'M SO DEPRESSED THAT I'VE STARTED CUTTING MY ARMS, AND I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHY. Also I hallucinate every few hours and see things—JUST TODAY I SAW BLOOD DRIPPING DOWN MY WALL." —Rita

A man rammed a police officer with his vehicle so he could grab the officer's gun and shoot himself. Another drowned his two small children and himself in a bathtub, while yet another beat a close friend for no apparent reason. None had any previous history of violence.

Withdrawal symptoms of antidepressants include suicidal thoughts, aggression, anxiety, depression, crying spells, insomnia, dizziness, vomiting, headaches, tremors and electric "zap" sensations in the brain.

KETAMINE

Ketamine is categorized as a *dissociative anesthetic*,* meaning it disconnects a person from their surroundings and self. While it has long been used in veterinary medicine, it is now more frequently used on humans. It can be injected, consumed in drinks, snorted or added to joints or cigarettes. Ketamine became a controlled substance in the US in 1999, which means it is illegal if not distributed by a licensed physician or veterinarian.

Short- and long-term effects include increased heart rate and blood pressure, nausea, vomiting, numbness, depression, amnesia, hallucinations and potentially fatal respiratory problems.

Ketamine users can also develop cravings for the drug. At high doses, users experience an effect referred to as *K-Hole*, an "out-of-body" or "near-death" experience.

Due to the detached, dreamlike state it creates in which the user finds it difficult to move, ketamine is another date-rape drug.

Brand Names

- Ketalar
- Ketalar SV
- Ketanest
- Ketanest S
- Ketaset

Street Names

- Cat Valium
- Green
- Jet
- K
- Special K
- Super Acid
- Super C

* dissociative anesthetic: a drug that distorts perception of sight and sound and produces feelings of detachment (dissociation) from the environment and self

ABUSE OF OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS

Over-the-counter cold and cough medicines containing the drug dextromethorphan (DXM) are also commonly abused. DXM comes in syrups, gels and tablets. Powdered DXM sold online poses a high risk because the potency is uncertain. It is found in over 100 cough and cold products, Coricidin, Delsym and Robitussin being the most abused.

Brand Names

- Comtrex
- Coricidin
- Delsym
- Dimetapp
- Mucinex DM
- Robitussin
- Triaminic
- Vicks Formula 44

Street Names

- CCC
- DXM
- Poor Man's PCP
- Robo
- Skittles
- Triple C

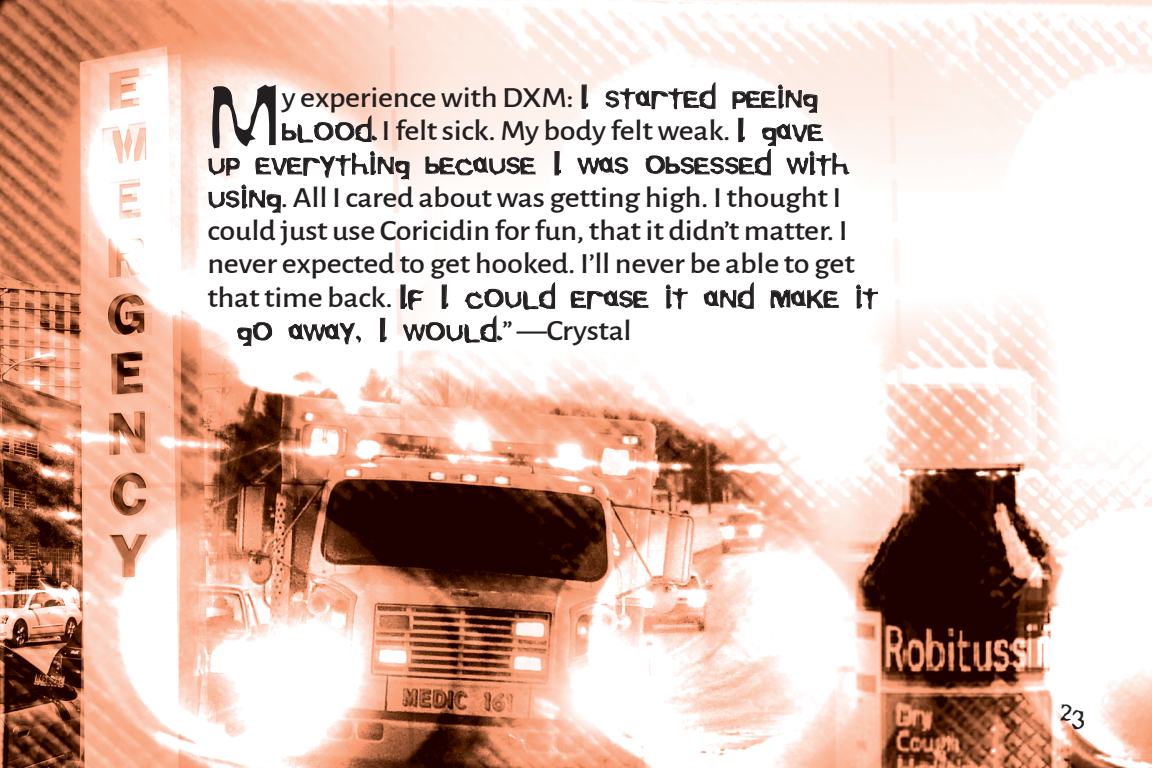


COUGH SYRUP (DXM) EFFECTS

- Hallucinations
- Hyperexcitability
- Insomnia
- Lethargy
- Physical dependence (with prolonged use)
- Paranoia
- Dizziness
- Slurred speech
- Delusions
- Sweating
- High blood pressure
- Liver and brain damage

Mixed with other drugs or by itself, DXM depresses the action of the brain and nervous system, which can interfere with breathing and the functioning of the heart. Large doses can cause a loss of consciousness, seizures, brain damage or death. DXM is particularly dangerous when combined with alcohol.

My experience with DXM: I started peeing blood. I felt sick. My body felt weak. I gave up everything because I was obsessed with using. All I cared about was getting high. I thought I could just use Coricidin for fun, that it didn't matter. I never expected to get hooked. I'll never be able to get that time back. If I could erase it and make it go away, I would." —Crystal



GLOBAL PRESCRIPTION TRENDS

Every day in the US, 1,800 teenagers abuse a prescription pain reliever for the first time.

In total, 570,000 teens admitted to misusing prescription painkillers, with nearly half taking a prescription stimulant like Adderall, Concerta or Ritalin.

When teens were asked about the dangers of experimenting with prescription drugs, only 30 percent felt misusing sedatives was risky, 34 percent thought misusing stimulants was risky and 43 percent believed abusing opioids was risky.

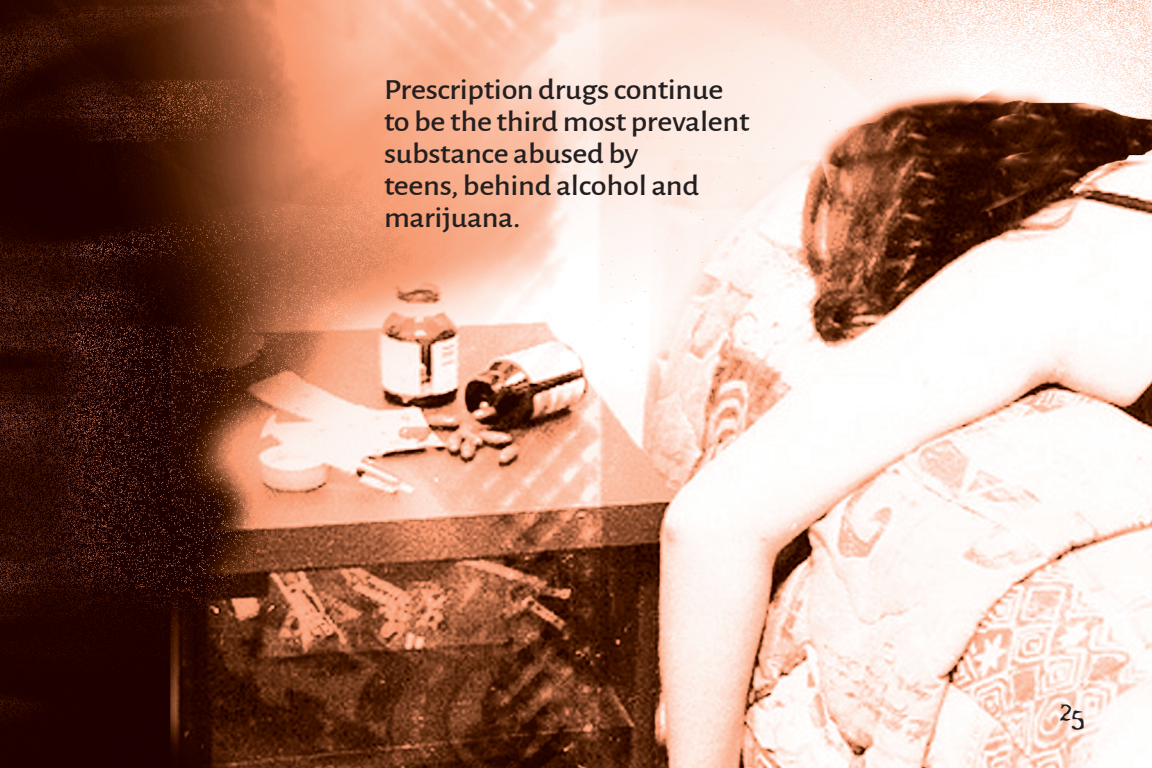
Prescription drug abuse is a global problem, particularly in Europe, Southern Africa and South Asia, but it is most common in the United States.

In the US alone, more than 14.4 million people abuse prescription drugs, about the same as the combined number of cocaine, hallucinogen and heroin abusers.

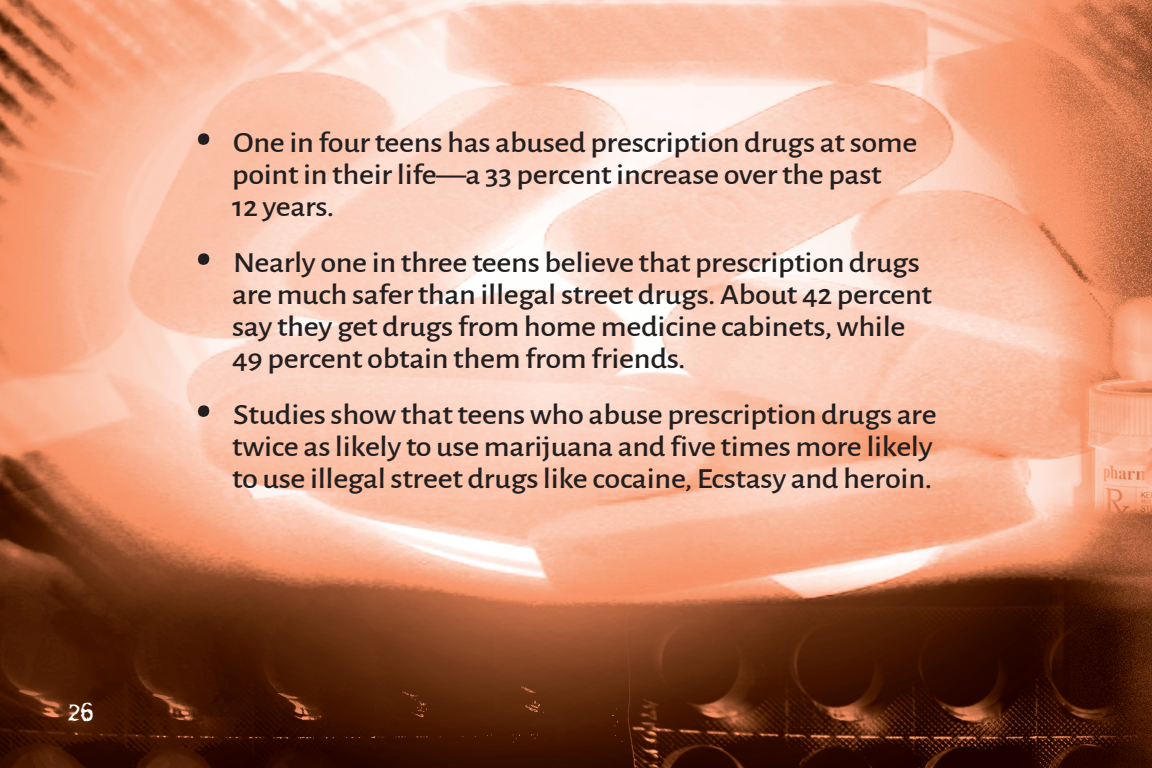
Prescription opioid painkillers cause the largest share of overdose deaths.

Drug overdoses now surpass 100,000 deaths annually, with nearly 80,000 caused by opioids.





Prescription drugs continue to be the third most prevalent substance abused by teens, behind alcohol and marijuana.



- One in four teens has abused prescription drugs at some point in their life—a 33 percent increase over the past 12 years.
- Nearly one in three teens believe that prescription drugs are much safer than illegal street drugs. About 42 percent say they get drugs from home medicine cabinets, while 49 percent obtain them from friends.
- Studies show that teens who abuse prescription drugs are twice as likely to use marijuana and five times more likely to use illegal street drugs like cocaine, Ecstasy and heroin.



I realized I was using more Xanax on a regular basis. I took time off work to get off it. Without the knowledge I was addicted, I went 'cold turkey.' For four days and nights, I was bedridden. I didn't sleep or eat. I vomited. I had hallucinations. On about the third day without Xanax, I started to become uncoordinated and unbalanced and bumped into things. On about the fourth day, I became really worried when I started having twitching sensations." —Patricia

The Truth About Drugs

Drugs are essentially poisons. The amount taken determines the effect.

A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds you up). A greater amount acts as a sedative (slows you down). An even larger amount poisons and can kill.

This is true of any drug. Only the amount needed to achieve the effect differs.

But many drugs have another liability: they directly affect the mind. They can distort the user's perception of what is happening around him or her. As a result, the person's actions may be odd, irrational, inappropriate and even destructive.

Drugs block off all sensations, the desirable ones along with the undesirable. So, while providing short-term help in the relief of pain, they also wipe out ability and alertness and muddy one's thinking.

Medicines are drugs that are intended to speed up, slow down or change something about the way your body is working to try to make it work better. Sometimes they are necessary. But they are still drugs: they act as stimulants or sedatives, and too much can kill you. So if you do not use medicines as they are supposed to be used, they can be as dangerous as illegal drugs.

The real answer is to get the facts and to not take drugs in the first place.



WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS?

People take drugs because they want to change something in their lives.

Here are some of the reasons young people have given for taking drugs:

- To fit in
- To escape or relax
- To relieve boredom
- To seem grown-up
- To rebel
- To experiment

They think drugs are a solution. But eventually, drugs become the problem.

Difficult as it may be to face one's problems, the consequences of drug use are always worse than the problem one is trying to solve with them. The real answer is to get the facts and to not take drugs in the first place.



Millions of copies of booklets such as this have been distributed to people around the world in over 20 languages.



As new drugs appear on the streets and more information about their effects becomes known, existing booklets are updated and new ones created.

The booklets are published by the Foundation for a Drug-Free World, a nonprofit public benefit organization headquartered in Los Angeles, California.

The foundation provides educational materials, advice and coordination for its international drug prevention network. It works with youth, parents, educators, volunteer organizations and government agencies—anyone with an interest in helping people lead lives free from drug abuse.

REFERENCES:

For the references used to compile this booklet, go to DrugFreeWorld.org/refs.

PHOTO CREDITS: pages 2, 9: Stockxpert; page 15: Sweet Faux Pas; page 24: Wes Tarca

FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

This booklet is one in a series of publications that covers the facts about marijuana, alcohol, fentanyl, synthetic drugs, Ecstasy, cocaine, crack cocaine, crystal meth and methamphetamine, inhalants, heroin, LSD and prescription drug abuse. Armed with this information, the reader can make the decision to live a drug-free life.

To do free online courses or to connect with a Drug-Free World Chapter in your area, go to DrugFreeWorld.org

Foundation for a Drug-Free World
DrugFreeWorld.org • info@drugfreeworld.org
1 (888) 668-6378 • 1 (818) 952-5260

Scan here to download this booklet

© 2025 Foundation for a Drug-Free World. All Rights Reserved. Truth About Drugs and the Foundation for a Drug-Free World Logo are trademarks owned by the Foundation for a Drug-Free World and are used with its permission. #S001562 - ENGLISH