

accidents, criminal actions, illegal drug use, decreased performance at work or school, and relational problems are all common effects of misusing prescription medications. Judgment is often seriously impaired.

### ACTION STEPS

- ✓ Schedule a visit with your primary care provider to discuss treatment options.
- ✓ Follow primary care provider's treatment recommendations, which may involve detox.
- ✓ Consider participating in a recovery or peer support program.
- ✓ Enlist the support of family and friends and be accountable to them for recovery.
- ✓ Explore the root causes of prescription drug abuse such as when and why it started.

### KEEP IN MIND

You're not alone, and help is available. Consider reaching out to your health care provider and engaging other counseling resources for guidance on next steps.

***What steps will you take today to be well and live life more fully?***



Prescription Drug Abuse  
Substance Use/Addictions Recovery

# Prescription Drug Abuse

The cost of  
**PRESCRIPTION  
DRUG ABUSE**  
is more than anyone  
can afford.

*Imagine for a moment how much more enjoyable  
and productive life might be if you were free from  
prescription drug abuse.*

When it comes to the risk  
of prescription drug abuse,  
everyone is susceptible.

Especially common among  
young people, an estimated 52  
million have taken prescription  
drugs for a nonmedical reason  
at least once. After marijuana  
and alcohol, prescription  
medications are the most  
abused substances in the U.S.

### THE CYCLE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

People misuse prescription drugs for many  
reasons. Social pressures, stress relief, and the  
need to be alert for work and school are common  
motivations. Because these medications activate  
the brain's reward center, you can become  
addicted easily and continue using them despite  
serious consequences.

### COMMONLY ABUSED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS AND SYMPTOMS

#### Painkillers

- Can include opioids, or painkillers, such as  
oxycodone (Oxycontin) and hydrocodone  
(Vicodin).
- Symptoms of abuse include sweating,

confusion, slowed breathing, lower blood  
pressure, poor coordination, and depression.

- A person abusing opioids is at risk for  
choking, dangerously low blood pressure and  
breathing rate, and inducing a coma.

#### Stimulants

- Can include Methylphenidate (Ritalin), used  
to treat ADHD and sleep disorders.
- Symptoms of abuse include dizziness, poor  
judgment, rapid eye movement, drowsiness,  
and imbalance.
- Abusing stimulants places one at risk for  
heart problems, seizures, paranoia, and  
hallucinations.

#### Sedatives

- Can include Alprazolam (Xanax) or Zolpidem  
(Ambien), which are prescribed for anxiety  
and sleep disorders.
- Symptoms of stimulant abuse include  
restlessness, irregular heartbeat, insomnia,  
high blood pressure, irritability, and weight  
loss.
- When stimulants are abused, a person is at  
risk for memory loss. Overdose can lead to a  
coma or death.

### RISKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Prescription drug abuse is highest among young  
adults; however, older people taking multiple  
medications are also at risk.

Besides physical symptoms, the consequences  
of prescription drug abuse are severe. Car