

If you are reading this brochure then you or someone you know probably believes that you are suffering from pharmaceutical abuse. Despite many users' beliefs, legal does not mean safe. Medicine does not mean legal. Just because the dealer wears a lab coat instead of a trench coat doesn't mean you can use medication any way you want without suffering dangerous consequences. Prescription drugs are synthetic, stronger, purer versions of the same drugs that 'junkies' buy on the street. They're just as dangerous. Abusing them is just as illegal.



Other Resources

Narcotics Anonymous 12 Step Program:
www.na.org

Office of National Drug Control Policy Prescription Abuse Information:
www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/prescr_drg_abuse.html

SAMHSA (search "prescription abuse"):
ncadi.samhsa.gov

Anonymous Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator:
<http://dasis3.samhsa.gov>

>IN
FOCUS
RECOVERY

PHARMACEUTICAL *abuse or addiction*

Abuse and Addiction

Abuse is any use of a medicine other than as prescribed or intended. This is illegal and very dangerous. Even a seemingly harmless medication such as aspirin can be deadly if overused.

Addiction is a physical dependency. Symptoms of addiction will depend upon the chemical(s) to which one is addicted. Addiction is a disease. The person has lost control over their behavior because they have altered their body chemistry. Control can be regained. Their life can be improved immeasurably.

Abusing medicines can easily lead to addiction.

Many habitual pharmaceutical users begin as experimental users or social users. There is much overlap between the two behaviors. **Social use** is just what it sounds like: using medicines at social gatherings. **Experimental** pharmaceutical users want to discover how different drugs feel. The experimental phase of pharmaceutical use can quickly become an obsession with a favorite chemical.

Detecting Pharmaceutical Dependency

Pharmaceutical addiction can also be called dependency. Here are some questions that might help to clarify if one is drug dependent:

Have I given up things that I once enjoyed in order to use drugs?

Have I ever chosen a chemical over a friend or loved one?

Do drugs interfere with my work or finances?

Do I find it difficult to turn down an offer of my favorite drug?

Do I need a drug to have a good or even acceptable day?

Do I get angry, depressed or snap at people when I am denied my preferred drugs?

Do I constantly seek and use my favorite drugs?

Do I suffer physically or mentally when I stop using suddenly?

Someone who could answer yes to any of the first four questions is at least beginning to be dependent upon their chosen drug(s). Someone who could answer yes to the second four questions is addicted to at least one drug. If you answer yes to any of those eight questions, please seek help.



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Effects of Chronic Pharmaceutical Abuse

Because of the incredible range of abusable medicines the effects of pharmaceutical abuse are difficult to classify. The symptoms of several types of abuse are detailed below.

Narcotic Analgesics such as Oxycontin® are extremely addictive and incredibly harmful. Essentially mass produced heroin, “Oxys” produce all the same symptoms and represent the same addiction threat. Organ failure, paranoia, rapid weight loss, intestinal problems, constipation, and chemical dependency are among the symptoms. Opioids are among the most abused drugs in rural areas and accounted for the nations largest increase in drug overdose mortality.

Over The Counter Cough Syrup is also very commonly abused. The worst symptoms of cough syrup abuse are psychosis, depression, hallucinations, nausea, sexual dysfunction, and serious heart problems.

Hypnotic anti-anxiety or sedative medication such as alprazolam (Xanax®) is also very commonly abused, especially at parties. The long term effects of this class of drugs are mostly mental, and very disturbing. Dizziness, exhaustion, slowed heart rate, serious confusion, and memory loss are not uncommon complaints. A serious danger is interaction with other common chemicals such as alcohol. This can cause blackouts, loss of behavioral control, or inability to breathe. A blackout coupled with amnesia creates other health concerns such as injury, sexual assault, and STDs.

Cessation and Recovery

Admitting that one is an addict is often the hardest part of recovery but it is the first, most important, and biggest step. If you can’t decide whether or not you are an addict, talk to your doctor. Your physician is legally obligated to keep this conversation private, and may be able to advise you on the first steps in your recovery.

Even if you are not an addict, you may need help to stop your self-destructive behavior. Sometimes a user is self-medicating an undiagnosed condition. Whatever the cause, an abuser’s chances of successful recovery are multiplied by a treatment program.

Treatment

Most addiction treatment programs will use a variety of methods. Behavioral intervention, therapy, medication, and support groups are some of the most effective and common techniques applied.

Detoxification, or detox, is a period of purging drugs from the user’s system. The period of detoxification will depend upon the length and severity of drug use.

Therapy is an exploration of the attitudes and mental attributes of the abuser. Therapy will help a user identify their use triggers and their reasons for seeking recovery. Behavioral intervention can be used to stop the pattern of abuse.

Medication can sometimes be administered to reduce withdrawal symptoms but, for obvious reasons, may not be advisable.

Support groups help one another in a unique way; only an addict knows what an addict suffers. A support group is how addicts get together to share stories, offer one another moral support, and let each other know they are not alone and people do care. Support groups can be instrumental to maintaining recovery and attendance is often mandatory as part of a comprehensive program.

Treatment Facilities

Treatment facilities combine many techniques and a nurturing environment to give a person the best chance at recovery. Finding one where you are comfortable is important.

Inpatient facilities, based in hospitals or rehabilitation clinics, limit contact with outside influences. This creates an environment where it is difficult or impossible to obtain drugs while preparing for the day the addict will have honed their refusal skills. Some of them seem like private homes or spas and are known as **residential programs**.

Outpatient programs can take place virtually anywhere. They offer many of the same services as inpatient facilities with the notable exception of round-the-clock care. Outpatients are afforded more freedom than inpatients. Many continue their personal and professional lives during treatment. This can make outpatient care more attractive to people who feel they can handle the pressure of withdrawal in an uncontrolled environment.

Rehabilitation services can be of highly variable durations, but a typical program runs 28 days.

The responsibility for recovery ultimately rests with the individual, but the right help can make all the difference.



When You Need Your Prescription

A common problem for the person misusing medicinal drugs is that they might sometimes legitimately require the prescription they’re misusing. DXM cough syrup abusers get colds. Painkiller addicts require surgery. A tranquilizer misuser develops panic attacks. Situations like these confront the misuser with difficult choices. Can they - and should they - refuse the prescription? Are they strong enough to use it and not abuse it? One must discuss their situation with their physician. Alternative medications or therapies may exist, but refusal skills are paramount.

Paying For Treatment

Treatment can sometimes be free, but it can also be costly. Thankfully, payment assistance is available in many forms. Private or public insurance may be an option. Charitable grants based on merit or need can be of great help, and can be located with the help of a social worker or substance abuse counselor. Government grants may be available, some which may cover the entire cost of treatment.

The bottom line: contact an addiction or drug abuse counselor, social worker or treatment facility and tell them that you need help. You may be surprised how eager they are to assist you.

You Can Do It

We live in a world where the potential to abuse powerful, legal narcotics constantly surrounds us. You are strong enough to overcome. There is hope, there is help and *a sober future awaits anyone with the discipline and drive to grasp it.*