



WHAT IS PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE?



WHAT ROLE DOES PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE **PLAY IN YOUR LIFE?**

For a lot of us, it can be difficult to conduct an accurate self-assessment when it comes to issues like this. It can help to have some objective questions to consider, such as:

Have you ever used a friend's prescription painkiller to get rid of a headache?

Have you ever taken a prescription stimulant to help you study the night before an exam?

Have you experimented with someone else's prescription medication to get high or feel good?

If you answered YES to one or more of these questions, consider a confidential check-in at O.P.E.N. to discuss the role that prescription drug misuse plays in your life.

"WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?"

Prescription medication misuse poses special considerations because, often, the beginning of use or misuse is very gradual. Recent research is increasingly observing ties to other risky behavior like binge drinking.

90% of college students who used Adderall non-medically in the past year were also binge drinkers.

A PLACE TO CHECK IN

O.P.E.N. offers students confidential check-ins, non-judgmental conversations about drug and alcohol use. Check-ins may be in a small group with other NU students or with an individual staff member. You can get personalized feedback about your use of alcohol or other drugs. Check-ins are not about telling anyone what they should or shouldn't do. We encourage students to make informed decisions and strive to reduce harm that can be associated with alcohol and other drug use and abuse.

To learn more or to set up a check-in appointment visit
www.northeastern.edu/OPEN



OFFICE OF PREVENTION & EDUCATION AT NORTHEASTERN

We encourage students to make informed decisions about alcohol and other drug use and strive to reduce the harm and negative consequences that can be associated with substance use and abuse.

www.northeastern.edu/open | open@neu.edu | 617-373-4459 |  

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS



GET SMART, CHOOSE SMART.

A confidential, non-judgmental resource for students.



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Ell Hall - Room 307
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"My check-in was eye-opening. Talking about issues related to alcohol without risk of getting in trouble was a great resource."



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PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

Prescription medications, when taken as prescribed, are very helpful to a lot of people. However, these same medications have the potential for abuse and dependence if they are misused.

Prescription medication abuse is not the norm, and can result in unintended consequences. Studies show that many people of all ages underestimate the risks associated with misusing and abusing prescription medications.

- USE THIS BOOKLET TO:**
- 1) Learn some objective facts about prescription drugs
 - 2) Share with a friend
 - 3) Get an overview of what O.P.E.N. has to offer

BE INFORMED

Even legally prescribed medications, when taken by others, or not as directed, can present serious and potentially harmful problems.

One serious risk is that misuse can lead to dependence.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS CAN BE ADDICTING

The latest research shows that students who take prescription drugs for non-medical reasons are at least five times more likely to develop a drug abuse problem than those who don't.¹

“ISN'T EVERY ONE DOING IT?”

NO. Over 89% of Northeastern students have not used prescription drugs that were not prescribed to them in the past year.² People frequently overestimate how much others misuse prescription medications because it's more noticeable or they hear stories about those who misuse prescription drugs. Additionally, people tend to think that everyone uses the same way that they or that their group of friends do. As the numbers show, that may not be the case.



UNDERSTAND THE CHEMISTRY

Some additional FACTS about different types of prescription medications and their effects on the body:

STIMULANTS

Includes medications prescribed to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD. Examples: Adderal, Ritalin, Concerta, Focalin, and Dexedrine.

(NOTE: Many energy drinks also contain substances designed to produce a stimulant effect. As such, they can be considered within this category of drug.)

Method of action: Stimulants increase alertness, attention and energy as well as elevate blood pressure and increase heart rate and respiration.

- Potential Effects of Misuse:**
- Repeated use over a short period can lead to feelings of hostility or paranoia.
 - High doses may result in dangerously high body temperature and an irregular heartbeat.
 - Dependence on stimulants is real consideration for anyone taking them without medical supervision.
 - If used chronically, withdrawal symptoms — including fatigue, depression, and disturbed sleep patterns — can emerge when the drugs are discontinued.

CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM (CNS) DEPRESSANTS

Sometimes referred to as sedatives and tranquilizers, used in the treatment of anxiety and sleep disorders. Examples: Valium and Xanax.

Method of action: CNS depressants work by slowing the brain's activity. They can produce a drowsy or calming effect.

- Potential Effects of Misuse:**
- Continued use can lead to physical dependence and withdrawal when use is abruptly reduced or stopped.
 - If after continued use an individual stops taking the medication, the brain's activity can “rebound” and race out of control, potentially leading to seizures, and other harmful consequences.
 - Combining CNS depressants with alcohol can affect heart rhythm, slow respiration, and even lead to death.



“It was enjoyable. Wasn't like any other drug course where they shove facts down your throat that don't affect you directly.”

OPIOIDS

Prescription narcotics usually prescribed for postsurgical pain relief and management of acute or chronic pain. Examples: codeine, oxycodone (Oxycontin, Percocet).

Method of action: Opioids attach to the receptors in your brain that block the perception of pain.

- Potential Effects of Misuse:**
- Can produce drowsiness and (depending on dosage), cause severe respiratory depression.
 - Some individuals experience euphoric effects from use; this feeling may be intensified for those who abuse opioids.
 - Misuse can lead to physical dependence and addiction. Withdrawal symptoms may be present when use is reduced or stopped.
 - Withdrawal symptoms include: restlessness, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, cold flashes.

MIXING ALCOHOL AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Layering the effects of prescription drugs, energy drinks, and alcohol can be a dangerous mixture. The effects vary, depending upon the combination of substances:

STIMULANTS AND ALCOHOL—MASK THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

When you mix alcohol with stimulants, you change the way you experience the effects of alcohol. Depending on how much is consumed during a given time, your Blood Alcohol Level may feel inaccurate due to the fact the stimulants are interrupting the body's natural ability to process the alcohol and send you the appropriate messages. This mixture can create potentially fatal situations due to a tendency to drink more in order to try and feel the expected effects of the alcohol.

DEPRESSANTS AND ALCOHOL—MULTIPLIES THE DEPRESSANT EFFECTS

When you mix alcohol with depressants, the depressant effect is multiplied and your central nervous system slows down. This mixture can create a serious and potentially fatal level of depression by inhibiting major organs like your heart and respiratory system. Complete organ failure is possible if there is enough of the depressant present.

 +  = **DOES NOT EQUAL 2**

NORTHEASTERN STUDENTS WEIGH-IN



“Good discussion. They helped me view things differently. The check-in felt open and non-judgmental.”

“Very helpful. Never felt threatened nor judged. They gave me useful information and tips to make smarter decisions down the road. Definitely a pleasant experience.”

“O.P.E.N. is a way for students to reflect on habits that may affect short-term and/or long-term goals. Walking out of the appointment I felt like my head was truly on straight and that I was on the right path not only with my education and starting a career, but also with how I deal with and control certain desires or distractions.”

FOOTNOTES: **1** References: SAMHSA, 2009 **2** This data was collected in a Northeastern University 2014 National College Health Assessment.

MISUSE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS INCLUDES:

- Using higher doses or taking more often than prescribed
- Taking other people's prescription medication
- Altering the medication's delivery method (e.g. crushing & snorting)
- Using a prescription medication in order to get high

SHARING YOUR PRESCRIPTION

If you take a prescription for a medical reason, you should not share these medications with anyone, regardless of the reason. You could unknowingly be putting your friends at risk due to a number of factors that aren't easily observed. These medications absolutely require medical supervision in order to be used safely.



O.P.E.N. is here for you

Alcohol and drug “check-ins”— confidential, non-judgmental (We don't tell you what you “should” or “shouldn't” do.)

Personalized feedback about your use, including how you compare to other students

Resources, information and tips – drawn from facts and evidence