

Warning Signs and Symptoms of Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse

Our youth are misusing and abusing a variety of different types of prescription drugs it can be difficult to know what signs to look out for. Each drug has different effects, especially when drugs are mixed together which some teens are doing at "pharming" or "bowl" parties. The effects can be very dangerous and can lead to permanent organ damage and even death. Some teens are also abusing prescription drugs by combining them with alcohol and/or crushing them and snorting them or injecting them to get a quicker, more intense high.

Be observant and intervene early if you think your child, student or patient may have a problem with prescription drugs or other substances. Knowing the signs of abuse is key in identifying a potential misuse of prescription medications.

Physical Signs and Symptoms

Depending on the drug being misused or abused you may notice the following

Stimulants	Sedatives/Depressants	Opioid Analgesics
➤ Hyperactivity ➤ Shaking ➤ Sweating ➤ Dilated pupils ➤ Fast or irregular heartbeat ➤ Elevated body temperature ➤ Seizures ➤ Paranoia/nervousness ➤ Repetitive behavior ➤ Loss of appetite or sudden unexplained weight loss	➤ Loss of coordination ➤ Respiratory depression ➤ Slowed reflexes ➤ Slurred speech ➤ Coma	➤ Sleep deprivation or "nodding" ➤ Pinpoint/constricted pupils ➤ Watery or droopy eyes ➤ Nausea/vomiting ➤ Constipation ➤ Slow slurred speech ➤ Slow gait/walk ➤ Dry skin, itching, skin infections ➤ Constant flu-like symptoms ➤ Track marks (bruised skin around injection sites)

Behavioral Signs/Changes

- Sudden mood changes, including irritability, negative attitude, personality change
- Extreme changes in groups of friends or hangout locations
- Forgetfulness or clumsiness
- Lying or being deceitful, unaccounted time away from home/missed school days,
- avoiding eye contact
- Losing interest in personal appearance, extracurricular activities or sports
- "Munchies" or sudden changes in appetite
- Unusually poor performance in school, on the field, in debate club or other activities
- Borrowing money or having extra cash
- Acting especially angry or abusive, or engaging in reckless behavior
- Visiting pro-drug websites