

Visit our website!

The UK HEEL program website is packed with useful information, including previous health bulletins. Visit us at www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL



ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN

JULY 2009

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

What You Should Know about Prescription Drug Abuse

Prescription drug abuse is the use of prescription medication for any reason other than that prescribed by a physician. This includes taking prescription drugs to get high or taking any prescription medication a physician did not prescribe specifically for you.

In recent years, prescription drug abuse has increased as drugs have become easier to obtain. According to 2003 Drug Enforcement Administration Statistics, Eastern Kentucky was named the prescription painkiller capital of the United States.

The elderly are particularly vulnerable to prescription drug abuse. They are more likely to be prescribed multiple and long-term prescriptions which could easily lead to drug interactions and misuse.

Prescription drug misuse ranks second only to marijuana as the nation's most widespread drug problem. Addiction is defined as a chronic, reoccurring disease of the brain. Despite the harmful and negative consequences of continued drug use, people who suffer from addiction cannot control their need for alcohol or other drugs. Addiction is considered a disease of the brain. Prolonged drug use will cause changes in the brain and consequently changes in behavior over time.

Commonly Abused Prescription Drugs

• **Opioids**

- ▶ Commonly called narcotics
- ▶ Usually prescribed by doctors to treat pain
- ▶ Can slow down or stop breathing



- ▶ Can cause death if an overdose occurs
- **Central Nervous System Depressants**
 - ▶ Have a calming effect
 - ▶ Used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders
 - ▶ Can cause memory problems
 - ▶ Can cause coma or death if an overdose occurs
- **Stimulants**
 - ▶ Increases alertness, attention, and energy
 - ▶ Used to treat asthma, respiratory problems, obesity, and neurological disorders
 - ▶ Can cause hallucinations, seizures, tremors, and increase the risk for stroke
 - ▶ Can cause death if an overdose occurs

Continued on the back 

Prescription drug misuse ranks second only to marijuana as the nation's most widespread drug problem.

Signs and Symptoms of Prescription Drug Abuse

- Increased use of drugs over time
- Changes in personality
- Becoming more withdrawn
- Continued usage of a drug after a medical condition has improved
- Using multiple pharmacies to obtain the medication
- Frequently reporting that medication has been lost or stolen
- Constantly needing more medicine
- Asking others for leftover or unused medication
- Frequently going to different emergency rooms or urgent treatment centers to obtain medications
- Changing or forging a prescription
- Stealing medication
- Trying to get medication from drug dealers or internet sources in other states or countries
- Excessive time spent trying to obtain prescription drugs
- Changes in appearance or daily hygiene habits
- Responsibilities are neglected
- Increased sensitivity to light and noise
- Blackouts and forgetfulness
- Defensiveness when asked if there is a problem

How Can you Help Someone who is Abusing Prescription Drugs?

Everyone wants to help when a person they care about is in trouble. The following suggestions might help:

MAKE SURE YOU DON'T:

- Ignore the signs of abuse
- Make excuses for unexplained behaviors
- Put yourself in a situation that is harmful
- Continue to be around a person who is abusive to you or others
- Give them money or let them borrow more than it takes to make a purchase
- Go against your own values
- Keep secrets that may harm you or them
- Label the person a "bad person"
- Blame yourself for their behavior

HELP THEM BY:

- Asking directly if they are using drugs
- Letting them know you are concerned about them and care
- Offering to assist in getting professional help
- Letting them know you are available if they need you

Remember, your attempts to help may not always be appreciated by the user. But, you still have to do the right thing and avoid being used by the user.

For Help or Information Call:

- Bluegrass Prevention Center (859) 225-3296
- Prescription Drug Addiction Helpline (800) 861-6854

QUIZ: TRUE OR FALSE

Is this prescription drug abuse?

- ___ 1. Mixing prescription drugs with over-the-counter medications without telling your doctor.
- ___ 2. Taking someone else's medicine.
- ___ 3. Mixing your medication with alcohol.
- ___ 4. Taking more medicine than the doctor prescribed.
- ___ 5. Taking medicine too frequently.
- ___ 6. Not taking your medicine and instead saving it to sell.

Answers: All true



SOURCES:

- <http://www.nida.nih.gov/PDF/RRPrescription.pdf>
- <http://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com/identify/behavior.html>
- <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=24572>
- <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm#Guidelines>

ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN

JULY 2009

Written by: Travonia Brown-Hughes, Ph.D., MCH Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Kentucky HEEL program

Edited by: Connee Wheeler

Designed by: Rusty Manseau

Download past health bulletins!

www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL/Bulletins

