

# Facts on Heroin and Prescription Opioids

A Serious Problem that can Lead to Heroin Addiction

Prescription drug misuse occurs when a person takes a prescription medication that is not prescribed for him/her, or takes it for reasons or in dosages other than as prescribed. The nonmedical use of prescription medications has increased in the past decade and has surpassed all illicit drug usage except marijuana in the United States. Misuse of prescription drugs can produce serious health effects, including addiction. One of the most striking aspects of the misuse of prescription medications has been the increase in painkiller abuse, which can lead to heroin use.

- Prescription analgesic overdoses killed nearly 15,000 people in the US in 2008, more than three times the 4,000 killed by these medications in 1999. (*CDC Vital Signs 11/2011*)
- Young adults ages 18 - 24 are particularly at risk, with increases in heroin/opioid admissions for treatment throughout the state. In particular, upstate New York (222% increase in admissions) and Long Island (242% increase) have been hard hit by this problem. (*NYS Client Data System*)
- In 2011, nonmedical use of prescription drugs among youth ages 12 - 17 and young adults ages 18 - 25 was the second most prevalent illicit drug use category, with marijuana being first. (*NSDUH 2011*)
- Between 2007 and 2012, the number of individuals using heroin during the past 30 days more than doubled nationwide (161,000 to 335,000). (*NSDUH 2012*)
- The percentage of New York State high school students who reported using heroin more than doubled between 2005 and 2011 (1.8 % to 4%). (*Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)*)

## Heroin and Prescription Drug Abuse Can Be Addictive and Deadly

### Loss of tolerance

Regular use of opioids leads to greater tolerance. For example, more is needed to achieve the same effect (high). Overdoses occur when people begin to use again. This is usually following a period of not using (abstinence) such as after coming out of treatment.

### Mixing drugs

Mixing heroin or prescription opioids with other drugs, especially depressants such as benzodiazepines (Xanax, Klonopin, etc.) or alcohol, can lead to an accidental overdose, respiratory problems and death. The effect of mixing drugs is greater than the effect one would expect if taking the drugs separately.

### Variation in strength of heroin

Heroin may vary in strength and effect based on the purity.

### Serious illness

Users with serious illness such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C, heart disease, and endocarditis are at greater risk for overdose.

## Prevent Prescription Drug Misuse

### Lock Your Meds

Prevent your children from using your medication by securing it in a place your child cannot access.

### Take Inventory

Download the Medicine Cabinet Inventory sheet; write down the name and amount of medications you currently have; and check regularly to ensure that nothing is missing. [www.combatheroin.ny.gov](http://www.combatheroin.ny.gov)



Combat Heroin  
and Prescription  
Drug Abuse

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**Proper Disposal**

To properly dispose of unused or expired medications, dispose of medications in a community drop box site or mix them with used cat litter, coffee grounds or sawdust to make them less appealing before throwing them in the garbage.

**Educate Yourself & Your Child**

Learn about the most commonly misused types of prescription medications (pain relievers, sedatives, stimulants and tranquilizers), then communicate the dangers to your child. Once is not enough.

**Set Clear Rules & Monitor Behavior**

Express your disapproval regarding the inappropriate and dangerous use of medications without a prescription. Monitor your child’s behavior to ensure that the rules are being followed.

**Pass It On**

Share your knowledge, experience and support with the parents of your child’s friends. Together, you can create a tipping point for change and raise safe, healthy and drug-free children.

**Classification of Commonly Abused Prescription Drugs**

<b>OPIOIDS</b> <i>indicated for pain include:</i>	<b>DEPRESSANTS</b> <i>indicated for anxiety and sleep disorders include:</i>	<b>STIMULANTS</b> <i>indicated for ADHD include:</i>
Hydrocodone (Vicodin)	Barbiturates	Dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine)
Oxycodone (Oxycontin)	Pentobarbital sodium (Nembutal)	Methylphenidate (Ritalin and Concerta)
Oxymorphone (Opana)	Benzodiazepines	Amphetamines (Adderall)
Hydromorphone (Dilaudid)	Diazepam (Valium)	
Meperidine (Demerol)	Alprazolam (Xanax)	
Diphenoxylate	Clonazepam (Klonopin)	
Codeine		
Fentanyl		
Morphine		
Opium and any other drug with morphine-like effects		

The following organizations offer information and resources that can help you and your family.

**Find help and hope**  
for alcoholism, drug abuse or problem gambling  
Call or Text **1-877-8-HOPENY**  
Text: HOPENY (467369) 1-877-846-7369



**Combat Heroin and Prescription Drug Abuse**

**Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services**

**Department of Health**

Combat Heroin – [www.combatheroin.ny.gov](http://www.combatheroin.ny.gov)  
New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services – [www.oasas.ny.gov](http://www.oasas.ny.gov)  
New York State Department of Health – [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)