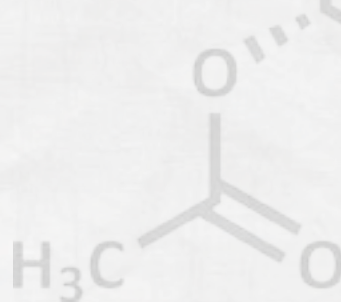


10 MOST DANGEROUS **PRESCRIPTION DRUGS** IN AMERICA



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INTRODUCTION

With the number of deaths linked to painkillers on the rise, prescription drug abuse is a national epidemic affecting millions of Americans. Doctors write more than 300 million prescriptions for painkillers each year – that's enough prescription drugs for every adult American to be medicated around-the-clock for 30 days. Fueled by the increase in prescription drugs, drug overdose deaths have more than tripled since 1990. And the increase in overdose deaths is just the tip of the iceberg. **For every individual who suffers a fatal overdose:**

- 10 people enter treatment for prescription drug abuse,
- 32 people visit the emergency room because of misuse and abuse,
- 130 people are misusing or abusing prescription drugs, and
- 825 people are using prescription drugs for non-medical reasons.

Prescription drug abuse is widespread, affects millions, and – due to difficult withdrawal symptoms coupled with the ready availability of medication – once individuals are addicted, it can be extremely difficult for them to quit.

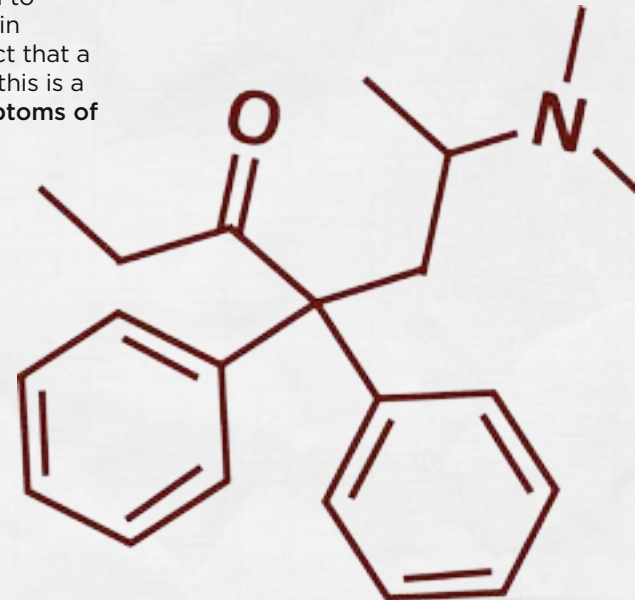


UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM: WHY PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ARE DEADLY

Prescription painkillers, such as Oxycontin and Vicodin, are some of the most deadly “legal” drugs. These drugs interfere with the brain’s ability to process pain. Prescription painkillers, which produce euphoric sensations similar to heroin, are highly addictive. Over time, individuals can become dependent on these medications in order to function on a daily basis. Individuals may grind, crush and snort these drugs in order to intensify their effects. While misusing prescription painkillers may increase their euphoric effects, snorting crushed medications also increase the risk for dangerous side effects. Misusing these drugs causes an individual’s respiration rate to slow. In some cases, the respiration rate may stop all together, leading to a fatal overdose.

Individuals who are addicted to prescription drugs, such as Oxycontin or Vicodin, frequently “doctor shop” in order to obtain a greater quantity of medication to satisfy their addiction. These individuals may go to multiple doctors to obtain prescriptions and multiple pharmacies to fill these prescriptions. If you suspect that a loved one is doctor shopping or purchasing medication on the black market, this is a red flag that your loved one may be abusing prescription drugs. **Other symptoms of prescription drug abuse include:**

- “Losing” prescriptions and requesting replacements
- Frequent requests for refills
- Ordering medication online
- “Borrowing” medication from friends and family
- Breaking or crushing pills



THE MOST DANGEROUS PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

While opiate-based prescription painkillers are extremely dangerous, so too are depressant and stimulants. Individuals who abuse prescription drugs not only struggle with psychological and physical dependency, but also difficult withdrawal symptoms.

Prescription drugs are just as dangerous as street drugs like cocaine and heroin. More than 120,000 Americans end up in the emergency room each year from prescription drug overdoses, according to the American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians. Prescription drug overdoses now kill more Americans than cocaine or heroin combined.

We have compiled the top ten most dangerous prescription drugs on the market today, ranked by the number of ER visits associated with each drug. This data was compiled in 2009.



Prescription drug overdoses now kill more Americans than cocaine or heroin



112,552 VISITS

XANAX

Xanax is a benzodiazepine, a class of medications known as tranquilizers, which also includes Valium, Klonopin and Ativan. Xanax works by depressing brain activity. This slows down the nervous system, causing sedation, decreased anxiety and muscle relaxation. Xanax is typically prescribed to help individuals cope with anxiety. However, even when used exactly as prescribed, Xanax can be highly addictive.

Xanax has an extremely short half-life; this means the drug leaves the body very quickly after an initial dose. Consequently, individuals may swing from feelings of intense calm (thanks to the medication's ability to sedate the central nervous system) to feelings of intense anxiety once Xanax leaves the body. This can lead to unpleasant withdrawal symptoms between doses, even when the medication is used exactly as prescribed. **To avoid these withdrawal symptoms, individuals will:**

- take Xanax in higher-than-prescribed quantities;
- take Xanax more frequently than prescribed; and
- crush, snort or chew pills.

Increased dosages followed by the sudden absence of Xanax causes neural hyperactivity, which can lead to seizures and other health problems. Because Xanax is highly addictive, if you suspect that your loved one is misusing or abusing Xanax, seeking treatment at a drug rehabilitation center is essential to addressing this addiction.



105,214 VISITS

OXYCONTIN

OxyContin is a narcotic pain reliever containing oxycodone, a synthesized pain reliever. Oxycodone mimics the behavior of heroin and morphine; the medication binds to opioid receptors, blocking the transmission of pain signals and creating feelings of euphoria. Unlike heroin, however, OxyContin is a time-release medication. Upon ingestion, some medication is immediately released; the majority of the medication, however, is slowly released over time. This provides individuals with a steady level of pain relief.

Individuals abuse OxyContin by circumventing the medication's time-release function. This is done by crushing, grinding and snorting tablets. Abusing OxyContin in this manner delivers an intense euphoric rush that quickly becomes highly addictive. Withdrawal symptoms are equally intense. **These symptoms include:**

- An intense psychological craving
- Severe jitters and anxiety
- Hot and cold flashes
- Nausea, diarrhea and vomiting
- Involuntary muscle spasms
- Overwhelming muscle and bone pain.



Like heroin abusers, OxyContin users continue to abuse this medication partially for the euphoric pleasure it creates and partially to avoid the drug's intense withdrawal symptoms. Inpatient rehab treatment is essential to helping individuals safely detox, manage withdrawal symptoms and overcome their addiction.



86,258 VISITS

VICODIN

Vicodin is a narcotic analgesic containing hydrocodone and acetaminophen. It is one of the most commonly prescribed prescription painkillers. In just five years, the number of prescriptions jumped from 112 million in 2006 to 131 million in 2011. When used as prescribed, Vicodin is extremely effective at relieving moderate to severe pain. However, the possibility for abuse is very high. One in five high school students report using Vicodin recreationally to achieve a euphoric high.

Vicodin is frequently taken in combination with Percocet, another prescription medication. Both of these medications have a significant impact on brain activity and the central nervous system. When taken together, the two drugs can cause individuals to lose consciousness, restrict blood flow to certain parts of the body, and cause muscle and nerve damage. Both Vicodin and Percocet contain acetaminophen; when taken together, the level of acetaminophen in these medications is enough to cause serious liver damage.

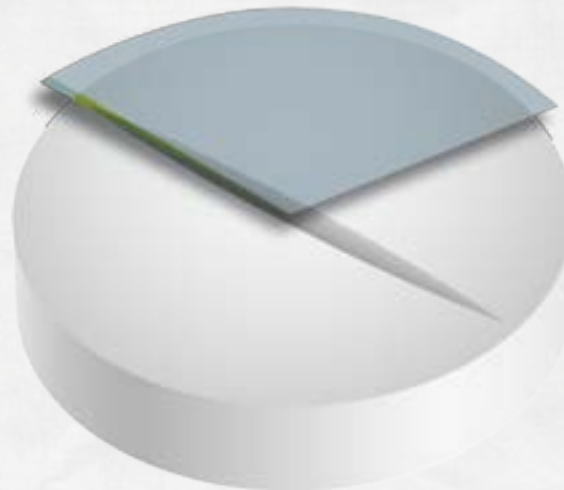


63,031 VISITS

METHADONE

Methadone is a synthetic opioid typically prescribed to help individuals manage the side effects of heroin or morphine addiction. Like heroin and morphine, methadone is highly addictive in its own right. Since methadone remains in the body for more than 20 hours after just one dose, the likelihood for abuse is even greater.

Individuals who abuse methadone typically have a history of drug abuse. These individuals may already be in a treatment program for heroin or morphine addiction. Combining methadone with heroin or morphine, or taking methadone in combination with alcohol, increases the drug's euphoric side effects and also increases the likelihood for a fatal overdose.



METHADONE ACCOUNTS FOR:

- 2% of painkiller prescriptions
- 33% of all prescription painkiller deaths



57,633 VISITS

KLONOPIN

Klonopin is a benzodiazepine, a class of medications known as tranquilizers, which also includes Valium, Xanax and Ativan. Klonopin is prescribed to prevent seizures and reduce anxiety associated with panic attacks. Like other benzodiazepine drugs, Klonopin works by altering brain chemistry and can easily be abused. Individuals who are “coming down” from Klonopin use – even when taken as prescribed – may feel like they are suffering from a severe hangover. Consequently, individuals begin abusing the drug to avoid these withdrawal symptoms and intensify the drug’s euphoric feelings.

Taking larger and larger doses of the drug increases the risk for overdose and serious health problems, including seizures. Because of Klonopin’s affect on brain chemistry, individuals who abuse the drug are also at increased risk for suicide and homicidal thoughts. Inpatient treatment is necessary to help individuals safely detox from Klonopin, manage the drug’s intense withdrawal symptoms, and achieve long-term sobriety.

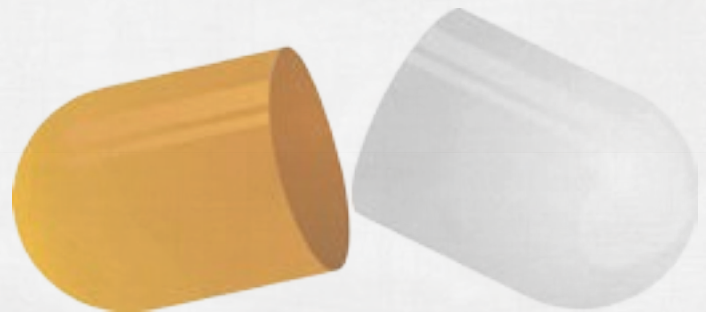


36,582 VISITS

ATIVAN

Ativan is a benzodiazepine, a class of medications known as tranquilizers, which also includes Valium, Xanax and Klonopin. Ativan is widely prescribed by physicians for the treatment of anxiety. It is also prescribed to relieve insomnia in younger children and manage seizures. While continuous use of Ativan is not recommended, doctors may still prescribe the medication to patients for several years or longer.

Ativan is one of the three most commonly abused benzodiazepines in the United States and, together with other sedatives, Ativan is linked to over half of all drug abuse related suicides. Thanks to its widely prescribed status, Ativan addiction has skyrocketed in recent years. When abused, it creates a trance-like state of relaxation. However, like all drugs, individuals must take increasingly higher quantities in order to achieve the same effect. This increases the risk for overdose and misuse.



HALF OF ALL DRUG ABUSE RELATED
SUICIDES ARE CAUSED BY ATIVAN



31,731 VISITS

MORPHINE

Morphine, part of the opiate family and classified as an opiate narcotic, is an extremely powerful and addictive painkiller. Morphine is typically prescribed to manage severe pain, such as pain following a serious car accident or the pain associated with late-stage cancer. Like heroin, users can quickly develop a physical and psychological addiction to this powerful drug, which leads to intense cravings. Because of the punishing withdrawal symptoms and powerful physical/psychological addiction, attempts to detox from morphine without medical supervision typically fail.

Morphine relapse rates are relatively high in comparison to the relapse rates of other drugs. Individuals who are addicted to morphine may also be prescribed methadone to help ease the withdrawal symptoms. Unfortunately, methadone can also be highly addictive. Some individuals may develop co-occurring addictions that make treatment more challenging. Attempting to go “cold turkey” without medical supervision, however, typically fails. If a loved one is struggling with a morphine addiction, supervised medical detox at an inpatient treatment facility is the best choice for addressing this addiction.



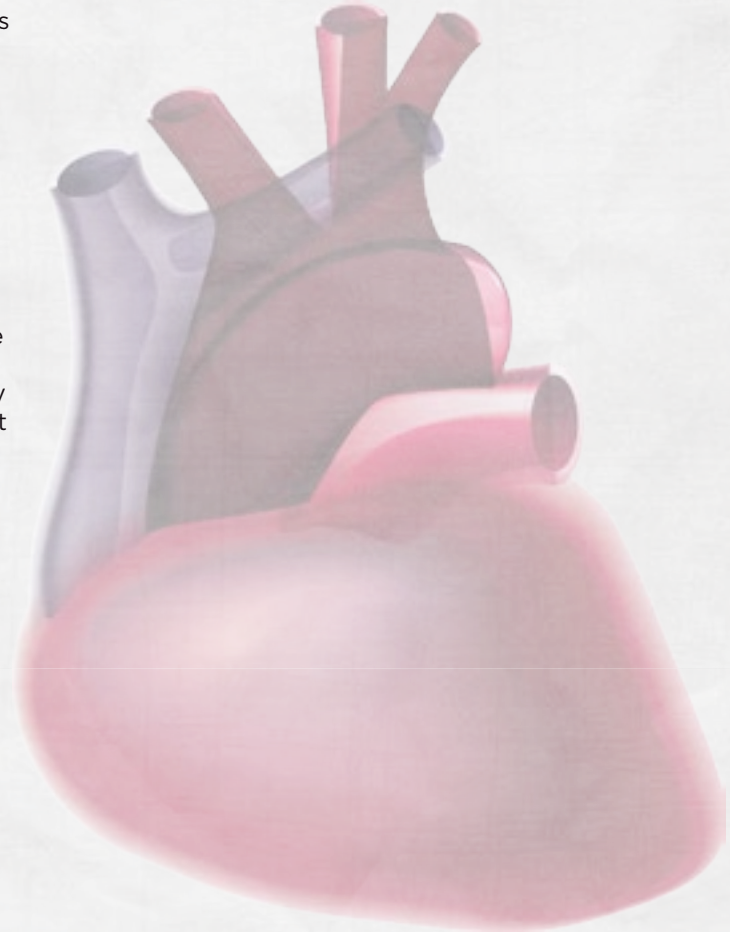
29,436 VISITS

SEROQUEL

Seroquel is an anti-psychotic that is prescribed to treat symptoms of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. The drug works by altering levels of dopamine within the brain. Many individuals who abuse Seroquel use it as a “come-down drug” to manage withdrawal symptoms caused by the abuse of stimulants, such as Ritalin, cocaine and speed. Seroquel may also be taken directly in combination with cocaine. This combination, known on the street as a “Q ball” or “Rosemary’s Dolly” eases the crash of cocaine. It also heightens the effects of heroin.

While Seroquel itself is not considered addictive, when abused, the drug can still cause serious and dangerous side effects. These side effects include diabetes, a permanent Parkinson’s-like palsy, and cardiac death. Since individuals who abuse Seroquel typically take it in combination with other drugs, inpatient rehab treatment is typically necessary to address these complex addictions. Co-occurring drug addictions require professional, supervised care.

Seroquel is often used in addiction treatment programs to help clients through withdrawal and other symptoms related to recovery. When used under careful observation by a medical profession, this drug is a major help in the recovery process. However, abuse of the drug can result in serious consequences. Only use Seroquel under professional care.



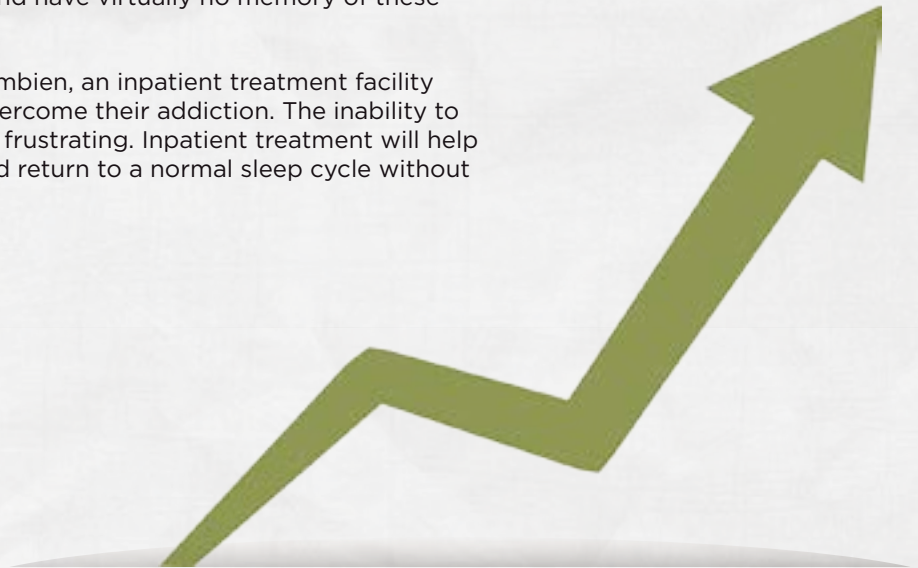
29,127 VISITS

AMBIEN

Ambien is one of the most commonly prescribed sleep aids. Even when used exactly as prescribed, however, Ambien is highly addictive. While the drug is meant for short-term sleeping assistance, many individuals who use the drug find themselves completely dependent on Ambien in order to fall asleep at night. Ambien withdrawal symptoms include nausea, fatigue, irritability, and worsened insomnia.

Ambien abuse has recently been linked to an increased risk for depression and suicide. When taken in combination with opioid drugs like heroin or opioid-based prescription painkillers, individuals are at increased risk for death by asphyxiation. Ambien also affects an individual's ability to form memories; while under the influence of Ambien, individuals may sleep walk, drive a car, have sex or simply get out of bed and perform household tasks – and have virtually no memory of these events the following morning.

If you suspect that a loved one is abusing Ambien, an inpatient treatment facility may be necessary to help your loved one overcome their addiction. The inability to fall asleep and stay asleep can be incredibly frustrating. Inpatient treatment will help your loved one overcome their addiction and return to a normal sleep cycle without the need for Ambien.



25,150 VISITS

VALIUM

Valium is a benzodiazepine, a class of medications known as tranquilizers, which also includes Ativan, Xanax and Klonopin. Valium is a sedative that is prescribed to treat anxiety, sleeplessness and muscle spasms. The drug works by decreasing brain activity. Individuals abuse Valium by crushing and snorting the pills, which causes a rush of good feelings. Some individuals will take Valium in combination with alcohol, which intensifies the drug's euphoric effects and creates a soothing, mellow feeling.

Valium quickly leaves the body, however, causing individuals to “crash” and intense feelings of anxiety and irritation. Other withdrawal symptoms include rapid heart rate, stomach cramps and depression. In order to counteract this crash, individuals who abuse Valium must take more of the drug or use another medication to “mellow-out” their bodies' reaction and return to this sluggish, relaxed state. Long-term Valium abuse can have a serious impact on the body, causing memory loss, hallucination, breathing difficulties, and slowed pulse. Individuals who abuse valium are at increased risk for coma and heart attack.

If you suspect that a loved one is abusing Valium, an inpatient rehab center is the best way to help your loved one safely detox, manage withdrawal symptoms and overcome their addiction.

