Are You Sure That’s What the Doctor Prescribed?

What is prescription drug abuse?

- Prescription drug abuse is the use of a prescription medication in a way not intended by the prescribing doctor, such as for the feelings you get from the drug. Prescription drug abuse or problematic use includes everything from taking a friend’s prescription painkiller for your backache to snorting or injecting ground-up pills to get high.

Most Commonly Abused Prescription Drugs

- **Opioids**- opioids are a type of narcotic medication used to treat moderate to severe pain
  - Common Drugs: Oxycontin, Vicodin, Morphine, Codeine

- **Anti-anxiety medications and sedatives**- these medications are used to treat anxiety by slowing down the central nervous system and sedatives are used to induce sedation by making the body relaxed, calm, and sleepy
  - Common Drugs: Xanax, Ambien, Valium, BuSpar, antidepressants

- **Stimulants**- stimulants speed up the activity within a person’s body and brain and produce feelings of increased awareness and concentration
  - Common Drugs: Ritalin, Adderall, Dexedrine, Concerta

Signs and Symptoms of Prescription Drug Abuse

- **Opioids**: constipation, depression, low blood pressure, decreased breathing rate, confusion, sweating, poor coordination

- **Anti-anxiety medications and sedatives**: drowsiness, confusion, unsteady walking, poor judgment, involuntary and rapid movement of the eyeball, dizziness

- **Stimulants**: weight loss, agitation, irritability, insomnia, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, restlessness, impulsive behavior

- **Other signs**: stealing, forging or selling prescriptions, taking higher doses than prescribed, excessive mood swings or hostility, increase or decrease in sleep, poor decision making, appearing to be high, unusually energetic or revved up, or sedated, continually “misplacing” prescriptions so more prescriptions can be written, seeking prescriptions from more than one doctor

Tips on Avoiding Abuse:

1. Always follow the directions on the Drug Facts label of your medicine.
2. Know the active ingredient in your medicine.
3. Use the dosage delivery device that comes with the medicine, such as a dropper or a dosing cup.
4. Do not mix any prescription drugs with energy or alcoholic drinks.
5. It is never okay to share your prescription drugs with others or take another person’s prescriptions drugs.
6. Do not alter the amount of prescription drug that you are given because you think you need to take less or more to feel better.
7. Just one instance of accidental misuse or intentional abuse of prescription drugs can be deadly.
8. Do not mix prescribed drugs with over the counter drugs unless advised by a health care provider.

Sources:
- [Mayo Clinic](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/prescription-drug-abuse/basics/definition/CON-20032471?p=1)
- [Help Guide](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/anxiety_medication_drugs_treatment.htm)