

Prescription Stimulant Drug Abuse in Teens and Young Adults

Why are stimulants abused?

Stimulants have been abused for both “performance enhancement” (e.g., to stay up all night cramming for an exam) and for recreational use (to get high).

How are stimulants abused?

Tablets are crushed and snorted or injected, which can cause complications because insoluble fillers in the tablets can block small blood vessels.

How do these drugs affect the brain?

Taken in doses and routes other than those prescribed, stimulants can increase the dopamine in the brain very quickly, disrupting normal communication between brain cells, producing euphoria, and increasing the risk of addiction.

- More teens are receiving prescription stimulants to treat symptoms of their attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- A consequence of this increase in prescribing may be a factor in the rise of medical misuse, drug diversion, and recreational use.
- Teen abuse of prescription drugs is second only to marijuana.
- The misconception that prescription controlled substances are safer than street drugs helps feed the increase in misuse.
- Stimulants are often abused for its ability to produce euphoric effects or to counteract sluggish feelings induced by depressant drugs like alcohol.
- Stimulants are taken to stay awake, increase alertness and concentration, boost energy, and get high.

Stimulants

Type	Conditions They Treat	Street Names
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine and Adderall) • Methylphenidate (Ritalin and Concerta) • Dexmethylphenidate (Focalin) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADHD • Narcolepsy (sleep disorder) • Severe Depression 	<p>Skippy, the smart drug, vitamin r, bennies, black beauties, roses, hearts, speed, or uppers</p>



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What negative effects result from stimulant abuse?

Taking high doses of a stimulant can cause an irregular heartbeat, dangerously high body temperatures, and the potential for heart failure or seizures. Taking high doses of certain stimulants, or repeatedly abusing them, can lead to feelings of hostility or paranoia

What happens when you stop taking stimulants?

Individuals show varying degrees of withdrawal symptoms after chronic stimulant abuse. Some symptoms that can occur upon cessation are an inability to experience pleasure (anhedonia), suicidal thinking, anxiety and irritability, fatigue, lack of energy, changes in sleep patterns, and intense drug cravings.

- Stimulant abuse can be extremely dangerous
- People who continue to abuse prescription stimulants may develop many severe problems including :
 - Severe weight loss/malnutrition
 - Mental illness/psychotic episodes
 - Depression
 - Delirium
 - Panic Attacks
 - Heart disease
 - Exhaustion
 - Decreased immune system function
 - Tolerance
 - Addiction



Definitions

- **Non-medical use or abuse:** the use of prescription drugs not prescribed for the respondent by a physician or used for the experience or feeling they caused
- **Drug Diversion:** the transfer of a prescription drug from a lawful to unlawful channel of distribution or use
- **Addiction:** Drug craving accompanied by physical dependence, which motivates a person to compulsively seek out the drug and abuses it despite knowing about the harmful consequences
- **Withdrawal:** A combination of reactions and behaviors caused by abrupt cessation of a drug the body is dependent on.
- **Dependence:** Central role the substance plays in the individual's life. Continue use of drug even though evidence of problems related to control of intake.
- **Tolerance:** A state of developing resistance to the effects of drugs requiring an increase in the dosage to achieve original effect

Resources

- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- Pharmacist's Letter