

# DEPRESSANTS

## What are Depressants?

Central Nervous System (CNS) depressants, sometimes referred to as sedatives and tranquilizers, are substances that “depress” or slow down normal brain function and produce a drowsy feeling.

Depressants work by affecting neurotransmitters that facilitate communication between brain cells.

Commonly prescribed medications include:



- **Barbiturates**, such as mephobarbital (Mebaral) and pentobarbital sodium (Nembutal), are used to treat anxiety, tension and sleep disorders.
- **Benzodiazepines**, such as diazepam (Valium), chlordiazepoxide HCl (Librium), and alprazolam (Xanax), are prescribed to treat acute stress reactions, panic attacks and insomnia. Usually, benzodiazepines are not prescribed for long-term use.

## Symptoms of Abusing Depressants

- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Unsteady gait
- Poor judgment
- Involuntary and rapid eye movement



# OPIOIDS

## What are Opioids?

Opioids are commonly prescribed because of their effective pain-relieving properties. Opioids attach to proteins called “opioid receptors,” blocking the perception of pain.

Medications that fall within this class (referred to as prescription narcotics) include morphine (i.e., Kadian, Avinza), codeine and oxycodone (i.e., OxyContin, Percodan, Percocet).



Mixing opioids with alcohol, antihistamines and depressants increases the risk of death. Opioids induce euphoria, putting the user at risk for overdose. Taking a single large dose could cause severe respiratory depression that can lead to death.

## Symptoms of Abusing Opioids

- Constipation
- Depression
- Low blood pressure
- Decreased respiration rate
- Confusion

# STIMULANTS

## What are Stimulants?

Stimulants are substances that mimic key brain neurotransmitters such as dopamine and norepinephrine.

Due to high potential for abuse and addiction, stimulants are now prescribed for the treatment of only a few health conditions, including narcolepsy, ADHD and depression.

Repeated use over a short period can lead to hostility or paranoia.



## Symptoms of Abusing Stimulants

- Weight loss
- Agitation
- Irritability
- Insomnia
- High blood pressure
- Irregular heartbeat



	Used To Treat	How They Work in the Body	Potential Problems If Misused or Abused	Mixing With Other Substances
<b>DEPRESSANTS</b> <i>Examples:</i> Ambien, Ativan, Klonopin, Valium, Xanax	Anxiety, tension, panic attacks, sleep disorders, acute stress reactions	Slow down the functions of the brain and central nervous system	Can cause withdrawal seizures and other life-threatening complications	You should NOT combine these prescription drugs with other substances, including alcohol and over-the-counter cold and allergy medication unless under a physician’s close supervision.  Drug interactions could slow the heart and respiratory system, increase blood pressure levels dangerously high and cause irregular heart rhythms, possibly leading to death.
<b>OPIOIDS</b> <i>Examples:</i> Methadone, OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin	Moderate to severe pain; may be prescribed after surgery	Block pain messages from reaching the brain	Can cause respiratory depression, slow and shallow breathing	
<b>STIMULANTS</b> <i>Examples:</i> Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin	Narcolepsy, depression, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other conditions	Speed up brain activity causing increased alertness, attention and energy that come with elevated blood pressure, increased heart rate and breathing	Can lead to dangerous increases in blood pressure, which places added strain on the heart. Dangerous increases in heart rate and respiration are also possible.	

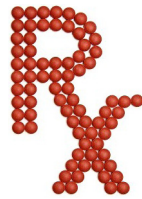
# PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Prescription and non-prescription medicines can improve your health if taken correctly. But taking medications, such as stimulants, sedatives and pain relievers, the wrong way or without a prescription can put your life at risk.

Unfortunately, college campuses nationwide have seen a substantial rise in the non-medical use of prescription drugs in recent years. Keep in mind, misusing or abusing prescription drugs is dangerous and even deadly.

## Prescription Drug Abuse is Not the Norm

Although prescription drug abuse is a big concern that puts young lives at risk, it's important to remember that not everyone is doing it. Most college students know it's not worth the risk to misuse or abuse prescription medications.



## Legal Issues

It's illegal to share, sell or distribute controlled medications with friends or be in possession of someone else's prescription, regardless of the reason.

Don't be pressured into sharing your prescriptions with friends or family. You could put your friends' health at risk if you share your medications.

## Recognize the Signs of Abuse. Get the Help You Need.

Students who think they or someone they know has a problem should seek help immediately. It's easier to tackle the problem now before it becomes an addiction and leads to more serious problems.

Early signs of abuse include:

- Using the medication more frequently or at higher doses without a physician's direction.
- Using the medication compulsively.
- Not being able to carry out normal daily activities because of drug misuse.

Use the following Resource Guide to find the help you need.

# RESOURCE GUIDE

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Health Education Resource Office (HERO)  
KU Student Health Services**

(785) 864-9570 • [www.studenthealth.ku.edu](http://www.studenthealth.ku.edu)

**National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE)**

(301) 656-8565 • [www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org)

## GETTING HELP

**KU Counseling and Psychological Services**  
(785) 864-2277 • [www.caps.ku.edu](http://www.caps.ku.edu)

**KU Legal Services for Students**  
(785) 864-5665 • [www.legalservices.ku.edu](http://www.legalservices.ku.edu)

## DCCCA, Inc.

DCCCA provides a variety of human services including: coordination, prevention and treatment of alcoholism and drug dependency to improve the safety, health and well-being of adults and children.

(785) 830-8238 • [www.dccca.org](http://www.dccca.org)

## Narcotics Anonymous

(785) 749-6631 • [www.marscna.net](http://www.marscna.net)



## Student Health Services

Watkins Memorial Health Center • 1200 Schwegler Drive  
Lawrence, KS 66045 • (785) 864-9500  
[www.studenthealth.ku.edu](http://www.studenthealth.ku.edu)

Contributing to  
Student Success

# Prescription Drugs

What You Need  
to Know About  
Controlled  
Substances



**KU** STUDENT  
HEALTH SERVICES  
The University of Kansas