

Signs and Symptoms of Prescription Drug Abuse

Note: The following are all characteristics of those abusing prescription drugs. However, some of these characteristics could also indicate other physical and emotional problems. If in doubt please see the assistance of a physician or call Reading Hospital Drug and Alcohol Hotline (610) 988- 8186.

Behavioral Characteristics

- Stealing, forging or selling prescriptions
- Taking higher doses than prescribed
- Excessive mood swings
- Increase or decrease in sleep
- Poor decision making
- Appearing to be high, unusually energetic or revved up, or sedated
- Continually “losing” prescriptions so more prescriptions must be written
- Seeking prescriptions from more than one doctor

Physical Characteristics

Signs and symptoms of prescription drug abuse depend on the particular drug a user is abusing. Please see the following symptoms for each of the classifications of prescription medications.

- Opioid Painkillers – Drugs such as oxycodone (OxyContin) and those containing hydrocodone (Vicodin)
 - Constipation
 - Depression
 - Decreased blood pressure
 - Decrease respiratory rate
 - Confusion
- Depressants – Sedatives and tranquilizers such as diazepam (Valium) and lorazepam (Ativan)
 - Dizziness
 - Confusion
 - Unsteady gait
 - Poor judgment
 - Involuntary and rapid eye movement
- Stimulants – Drugs that are used to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and sleep disorders
 - Weight loss
 - Agitation
 - Irritability
 - Insomnia
 - Increased blood pressure
 - Irregular heartbeat