

Drugs/Prescription Drug Abuse

Drugs are substances that cause a change in a person's physical and/or psychological state. **Medicines** are drugs that are used to cure, prevent, or treat illnesses or discomfort.

ALL medicines ARE drugs. ALL drugs ARE NOT medicines.

Prescription Drugs are ordered by a doctor in writing. **Over-the-counter (OTC)** drugs are medicines that can be bought without a prescription.

Prescription Drugs are stronger than OTC drugs, have more serious side effects, may interfere with other drugs, and can be addictive. These drugs are regulated by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA).

People often think that prescription and OTC drugs are safer than illegal drugs, but that is only true when they are taken exactly as prescribed and only for the purpose intended. Legal medicines with legitimate uses can be abused, meaning they are taken by someone other than the patient or in a manner or dose other than what has been recommended. When abused, prescription and OTC drugs can be addictive and put abusers at risk for other adverse health effects, including overdose especially when taken along with other drugs or alcohol.

Illegal drugs are drugs whose production or use is prohibited or strictly controlled through a prescription. Illegal drugs may cause permanent damage to your brain and body. Using illegal drugs may cause addiction, increase risk of spreading disease through sharing needles, result in overdose or death, and lead to making irresponsible decisions.

A **controlled substance** is a drug or chemical whose manufacture, possession, or use is regulated by the government and under legislative control.

Gateway drugs are drugs that can lead to the use of other drugs. The three most common gateway drugs are alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco.

All drugs, legal and illegal, are classified into different categories based on their similar effects on the mind and body: depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, club/designer, and opiates. **Depressants** slow down the central nervous system. They are most often prescribed for anxiety and sleep disorders. Xanax and Valium are examples of depressants. **Stimulants** speed up the central nervous system. Stimulants make it difficult to sleep and suppress your appetite. Caffeine, nicotine, and bath salts are common stimulants. **Hallucinogens** change the way people see, hear, feel, or think. The most common hallucinogen is LSD. **Club/designer drugs** are psychoactive drugs and the effects are similar to hallucinogens or narcotics, but have a lightly altered chemical structure. Ecstasy is a popular club drug. **Opiates**, also known as narcotics, are powerful and highly addictive drugs. Morphine and codeine are examples of opiates.

Check for Understanding

- What would you tell a friend who is considering taking her mom's prescription pain reliever?

- Why are gateway drugs so popular with teens?

- Why do you think people use drugs knowing all the bad side effects, including death?

- What would be good alternatives to drug or substance use?

Coach's Reflection: