

# Important Facts About Controlled Substance Prescription Medications

## Know the Risks

There are many types of controlled substance prescription medications that are used to treat a variety of conditions including: moderate to severe pain, cough, attention disorders, anxiety, seizures, sleeping disorders, obesity, and many others. Controlled substances can be effective aids in the management and treatment of these conditions, when taken as directed by your health care practitioner. Controlled substance medications can also lead to serious risks and potential complications, which may include heart attack or stroke, hormonal imbalances that also may affect certain organs, abnormal thoughts and behavior, memory loss or disturbances, anxiety, worsening of depression, suicidal thoughts, difficulty breathing, significant drowsiness, stupor, coma, and death. Possible side effects will vary depending on the type of medication you are taking. Even when used as directed, additional risks are possible including physical dependence, tolerance, misuse and abuse, addiction, relapse of addiction symptoms, overdose, and death.

## Know the Facts

- Combining controlled substances with alcohol or certain other medications, such as benzodiazepines (some examples are alprazolam, diazepam, and clonazepam), increases the risk of experiencing serious or life-threatening side effects.
- Other prescriptions or over-the-counter medications may significantly increase the risk of side effects, including overdose. Always read the warning labels on any prescription or over-the-counter medications before taking, and take only as directed.
- Discontinuing certain medications, such as an opioid or benzodiazepine, may lead to withdrawal symptoms, which may include: leg or abdominal cramps, muscular pain and tremors, piloerection (goosebumps), nausea, vomiting, appetite changes, heart palpitations, panic attacks, mood swings, diarrhea, dilated pupils, thinking and memory difficulties, and sleep disturbances. Symptoms will vary depending on the controlled substance medication you are taking.
- Do not increase your dose or take more frequent doses than prescribed by your practitioner.
- If your pain is relieved to your satisfaction, you may decide to stop taking the medication. If you have leftover medication, you should follow appropriate disposal guidelines.
- If you prefer to avoid opioids altogether, your doctor can talk to you about other, alternative means of treating your pain without opioids.
- Seek medical attention immediately if experiencing unusual symptoms, which may include: pain, swelling, redness or tingling in arms or legs, severe headache, confusion, chest pain, severe pelvic pain, dizziness or lightheadedness, suicidal thoughts, extreme sleepiness, slowed or difficult breathing, or unresponsiveness. Be particularly cautious when beginning treatment with a controlled substance prescription medication, when your health care practitioner changes your dose, or if you consume extra dosages.
- As a safety measure, while you are taking opioid medications, you may want your family and friends to be trained to administer naloxone to reverse an overdose. For more information on naloxone and training available in your area, go to [www.oasas.ny.gov/atc/ATCherointraining.cfm](http://www.oasas.ny.gov/atc/ATCherointraining.cfm).
- Medication is intended only for the person for whom it was prescribed. Never share medications.
- Store all medications in one designated location, in a dry and cool place. Be sure the medication location is safe and secure. Routine tracking of medications is a good idea, especially when others live with, or are visiting, you. A Medicine Cabinet Inventory Sheet can be downloaded at: [www.health.ny.gov/publications/1090.pdf](http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1090.pdf).
- For more information concerning the possible risks and side effects of this prescription, or other medications you are taking, talk to your prescriber or pharmacist.

## Warning Signs of Addiction

### Physical Signs:

- Loss or increase in appetite; unexplained weight loss or gain
- Inability to sleep, unusual laziness, or agitation
- Smell of substances on breath or clothes
- Nausea, vomiting, sweating, shakes of hands, feet or head
- Red, watery eyes, pupils larger or smaller, blank stare, thick tongue, slurred or pressured speech

### Behavioral Signs:

- Change in attitude/personality
- Change in friends; new hangouts
- Avoiding contact with family
- Change in activities, hobbies or sports
- Drop in grades or work performance
- Isolation and secretive behavior
- Moodiness, irritability, nervousness, giddiness, nodding off
- Stealing
- Problems, absenteeism, tardiness at work/school, unusual conflicts with family or friends

### Advanced Warning Sign:

- Missing Medication

## Help is Available

The New York State Hopeline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for alcoholism, drug abuse and problem gambling. All calls are free, anonymous and confidential.



## Proper Disposal of Medications Can Aid in the Prevention of:

- Drug diversion and abuse
- Accidental poisonings
- Confusion with other medications in the same storage area
- Consumption of old or expired medication
- Medication being released into the environment

## Safe Disposal Options in New York State:

Your local pharmacy may be able to accept your discontinued, expired or unwanted medications as a DEA Authorized Collector. Check with your pharmacy or use the DEA Authorized Collection Sites link below.

Medication Drop Boxes Listed by County	<a href="http://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/narcotic/medication_drop_boxes/">www.health.ny.gov/professionals/narcotic/medication_drop_boxes/</a>
New York State Drug Collection Events	<a href="http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/63826.html">www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/63826.html</a>
DEA Drug Take Back Events	<a href="http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html">www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html</a>
DEA Authorized Collection Sites	<a href="http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e1s1">www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e1s1</a>
Medication Mail Back Programs	Inquire at local pharmacies concerning cost and availability

**It's important to know the facts. It's going to take all of us.  
Let's come together, prevent substance abuse and combat addiction.**



**Combat Heroin  
and Prescription  
Drug Abuse**

**Department  
of Health**

**Office of Alcoholism and  
Substance Abuse Services**

Combat Heroin – [www.combatheroin.ny.gov](http://www.combatheroin.ny.gov)

New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services – [www.oasas.ny.gov](http://www.oasas.ny.gov)

New York State Department of Health – [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)