

### **How it Happens**

*“But my doctor prescribed them and I need them for my headaches, sleeplessness, anxiety and just to calm my nerves! Besides, I’m not really hooked, they just help me to function normally.”*

By the time a person becomes dependent upon a substance just in order to cope with everyday life, he/she may have unknowingly become addicted.

Many are helped by the responsible use of prescription drugs when under the care of a physician. Sometimes a person is prescribed a mood-altering medication to get through a difficult period in life. However, when that difficult time is over and they find themselves still depending on the substance to be a crutch in order to cope with life’s everyday problems, they may be in trouble.

Of course there are cases where the usage of medically supervised drugs are mandatory for a person’s very life and wellbeing. The problem begins with self-medication and abuse, which in turn leads to full-blown addiction, usually before a “problem” is even recognized.

Commonly used or abused prescription drugs include:

- Opioids, which are most often prescribed to treat pain
- central nervous system (CNS) depressants, which are used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders
- stimulants, which are prescribed to treat narcolepsy, a sleep disorder and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

These drugs can alter the brain's activity and lead to addiction. While we do not yet understand all of the reasons for the increasing abuse of prescription drugs, we do know that accessibility is likely a contributing factor. In addition to the increasing number of medicines being prescribed for a variety of health problems, some medications can be obtained easily from online pharmacies.

### **Who Does it Affect?**

The non-medical use or abuse of prescription drugs is a serious and growing public health problem. The elderly are among those most vulnerable, because they are more likely to be prescribed long-term as well as multiple prescriptions, which could possibly lead to unintentional misuse.

Another area of concern is the misuse of prescription drugs by teens and college aged youth. Recent surveys have found that more teens abuse prescription drugs than any illicit drug, except marijuana. When parents think about keeping their teens safe from drugs, they don't usually think of drugs that could be found IN their homes. Teens, who typically get prescription drugs from relatives or friends, overwhelmingly report that they didn't think these drugs were as dangerous as illicit drugs so they felt safe in trying them. Because these drugs are so readily available, and many teens believe they are a safe way to get high, teens that wouldn't otherwise touch illicit drugs might abuse prescription drugs.

Most people do take their prescription medications responsibly; but the number of those, who are taking them for non-medical reasons, is rising.

### **What are the Dangers?**

There are serious health risks related to the abuse of prescription drugs. A single large dose of either prescription or over-the-counter painkillers/depressants can cause breathing difficulties that can lead to death. Stimulant abuse can lead to hostility, paranoia, the potential for heart system failure or fatal seizures. Even in small doses, depressants and painkillers have subtle effects on motor skills, judgment and the ability to learn.

Because the medications associated with prescription drug abuse activate the brain's reward center, it's easy to become addicted to them. Addicts continue to use their drug of choice even when using makes their lives worse – just like nicotine addicts continue smoking cigarettes even when it harms their health and they want to quit.

The elderly can be at risk for prescription drug abuse when they intentionally take medications that are not medically necessary. For example, in addition to prescription pills, a large percentage of older adults also use over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements. Because of changes in drug metabolism with age and the potential for drug interactions, they can experience adverse health consequences. Those who take certain drugs are at an increased risk for cognitive impairment associated with their use, leading to possible falls (causing hip and thigh fractures), as well as vehicle accidents.

Another concern is that medications intended for use by elders can become a source of supply for the young.

Addiction to prescription drugs spans all age, race, economic, social and religious boundaries. Anyone can fall prey!

### **What We Can Do**

Years of research have shown us that addiction to any drug (illicit or prescribed) is a brain disease that, like other chronic diseases, can be treated effectively. No single type of treatment is appropriate for all individuals addicted to prescription drugs. Treatment must take into account the type of drug used and the needs of the individual. Successful treatment may need to incorporate several components, including detoxification, counseling, and in some cases, the use of pharmacological therapies. Many normal-acting people may only take a minimum dose but can be just as addicted as heavy users, finding it nearly impossible to stop on their own. Withdrawals should be medically supervised because sudden withdrawals can cause seizures or even death, regardless of dosage size. Once out of physical danger, a program of recovery must be established for the addict in order to prevent a return to active addiction.

### **Abstinence Is A Choice!**

The good news is – there is HOPE! You CAN get well and live FREE from your addictive substances. You no longer need to stay stuck in your lonely prison of addiction.

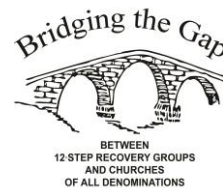
Many recovering prescription pill addicts have testified that the light at the end of the tunnel is worth any amount of agony to get there! The Lord Jesus Christ and His power can get you there!

Freedom from the bondage of chemical dependency is possible but the first step is yours. If you even think you or someone close to you *might* have a problem, **ASK FOR HELP!** You don't have to live like that anymore!

**Overcomers Outreach** uses the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Holy Bible to discover the wisdom of God and apply His teachings to our daily lives. We claim Jesus Christ as our “higher power” and share our trials and victories with one another in a confidential and secure environment. We meet weekly in loving support of one another, not as a substitute for, but rather a supplement to other 12-Step groups. We are non-professional and non-profit, and we welcome anyone who is not opposed to our general method of recovery, whatever his or her presenting problem.

*“Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”*

*John 16:33 (NLT)*



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**Overcomers Outreach Canada Inc.**

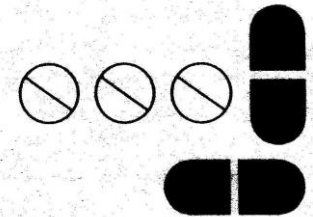
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# Hooked

## On



# Prescription Pills?



A Christ-Centered 12-Step Recovery Group  
addressing addictions  
and those affected by them