

DRUG  
ENFORCEMENT  
ADMINISTRATION



THE TRUTH ABOUT

# Prescription Drug Abuse



When used properly and as prescribed, prescription drugs may enhance one's health, well-being, and quality of life; however, when prescription drugs are abused, the consequences can be **deadly**.

- Since 2002, deaths resulting from the misuse of prescription drugs have outpaced overdose deaths from cocaine and heroin combined.
- The misuse of prescription drugs is more prevalent than the use of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, MDMA, and PCP combined.
- Only marijuana is abused more than prescription drugs in the United States.

Many prescription drug abusers, when unable to obtain or afford prescription drugs, begin using heroin because heroin is a cheaper alternative that offers the same physiological effects.

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## Drug Poisoning Deaths

- Opioid analgesic deaths 16,235
- Cocaine deaths 4,944
- Heroin deaths 8,257

National Center for Health Statistics/Centers for Disease Control, 2013.

## Did you know?

- Prescription opioid analgesics, specifically those containing oxycodone and hydrocodone, are the most common types of prescription drugs that are diverted for misuse and abused.

Source: DEA National Drug Threat Assessment Summary, October 2015.

- Each day in the United States, over 120 people die as a result of a drug overdose.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Prescription Drug Overdose in the United States: Fact sheet, January 9, 2015.

- According to the 2014 Monitoring the Future drug survey, Adderall® abuse was the second most abused drug by 12th graders. Only marijuana was abused more by 12th graders than Adderall®.

- In 2014, approximately 75% of current nonmedical users of prescription drugs (12 years and older) reported using pain relievers.

Source: 2014 National Survey of Drug Use and Health. Released September 2015.

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For drug prevention information, visit DEA's websites:



**GetSmartAboutDrugs.com**  
For parents, caregivers, and educators

**JustThinkTwice.com**  
For teens

**dea.gov**

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