



Know the Signs to Stay Well Prescription Drug Misuse



5 Minute Safety Talk

Staying well is paramount to living a happy and fulfilled life, but it is also critically significant to our safety.

When we talk about wellness, we often think of subjects like healthy eating and exercise, which are of course important, but let's explore another issue: opioid pain medication misuse. When not under control, this issue can greatly put our safety and that of others around us at risk. Do you know how to recognize the signs in yourself and others?

Opioid Pain Medication Misuse

Opioid painkillers can become very addicting quickly, even when taken for a legitimate medical issue. This is a growing health crisis with more than 30,000 people dying from overdoses related to opioid pain relievers each year, according to CDC data. So how might you know if you have a problem? Many people who get addicted to opioids did not feel high when they took them but did feel:

- Increased energy
- More confident
- Smarter
- More relaxed
- Less depressed

You should be concerned about your own wellbeing:

- If you start thinking about taking more than currently prescribed
- If you are overly focused on how much longer until your next dose or take more frequent doses than prescribed
- If you are continuing to take the painkillers when you don't need them for pain anymore
- If you are accessing more painkiller medication from another source beside your physician
- If you ever crush, chew, snort, or inject your pain medicine, then you likely already have an opioid misuse disorder and you need to speak with your doctor and get help immediately

Here are behaviors to look for in others that may signal potential misuse. Common on-the-job indicators may vary depending on whether the employee is using or in withdrawal.

While using opioids, employees may:

- Have small pupils
- Be sleepy or lethargic
- Complain of constipation
- Have itchy or flushed skin
- Be confused or have slurred speech

On the other hand, employees in opioid withdrawal may:

- Be anxious or nervous
- Have excessive shaking, sweating or yawning
- Have a runny nose
- Experience diarrhea
- Complain of abdominal cramps
- Be achy or in pain

As you can see, there are many potential signs and symptoms of prescription drug misuse. If you are concerned you have an issue, reach out to someone whether it be your family, friends, coworkers, supervisor, doctor etc. Many companies also have Employee Assistance Programs that can help. If you are concerned for the wellbeing of a coworker, let someone know you are worried. Consider reaching out to your supervisor, the person's supervisor or Human Resources.

So let's look out for one another and not be afraid to seek help if we need it. It could save a life, maybe even your own.



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