

Profile: Oxycodone

What is oxycodone?

Oxycodone is a semi-synthetic opiate and the active ingredient in a number of prescription pain relief medications. OxyContin, a time-release formula of oxycodone, is available in doses ranging from 10 to 80 mg, and is intended for long-term relief of severe pain. The medications Percocet, Percodan, and Tylox contain small doses (2.5 to 10 mg) of oxycodone combined with other active ingredients, such as aspirin and acetaminophen. Oxycodone is a Schedule II controlled substance with high abuse potential.



How is oxycodone misused?

Those who abuse the drug generally do so in three ways: crushing the pill into a fine powder and snorting it; chewing it; or crushing and dissolving the tablets in water and injecting the solution. These methods are primarily used to defeat the time-release mechanism in OxyContin tablets, causing the active ingredient to take full effect almost immediately after ingestion. Using oxycodone like this dramatically increases the overdose risk.

Why do people misuse oxycodone?

As an opiate, oxycodone is similar to heroin. It elevates levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which is linked with pleasurable experiences. Some illicit users abuse oxycodone to achieve a euphoric high. Opiate addicts use it to control withdrawal symptoms when heroin or morphine is unavailable.

What are some street names for oxycodone?

OxyContin®

- Oxy
- OC
- Oxycottons
- Oxy 80s
- Killers
- Kickers
- Blue
- Hillbilly Heroin
- Jammed—under the influence of Oxy-Contin

Percodan® or Percocet®

- Percs
- Percodoms

What are the effects of oxycodone?

Like other narcotic medications, oxycodone can impair mental and physical abilities. Other side effects include breathing irregularity or respiratory depression, headaches, nausea, dizziness, seizures, low

blood pressure, and heart failure. Overdose death is possible due to cardiac arrest or slowed breathing, especially when ingesting crushed OxyContin tablets.



How do drug abusers get prescription drugs?

Illicit users of prescription drugs like oxycodone get them through forged prescriptions, pharmacy theft, doctor shopping (going from doctor to doctor to collect multiple prescriptions), organized drug rings that divert and sell the drugs, and foreign diversion and smuggling. Unscrupulous doctors, dentists, and pharmacists have also prescribed and sold controlled substances for illicit use.



Is oxycodone addictive?

Yes. Prolonged use will lead to tolerance and the need for higher doses to achieve the desired effect. Oxycodone will eventually change the brain in such a way that users cannot quit on their own. These are both symptoms of dependence. When users suddenly stop taking oxycodone, they can experience severe withdrawal symptoms, such as anxiety, nausea, insomnia, muscle pain, fever, and other flu-like symptoms.

Online Resources

Center for Substance Abuse Research
www.cesar.umd.edu

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.nida.nih.gov

Drug Enforcement Administration Office
of Diversion Control
www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov

Partnership for a Drug-Free America
www.drugfreeamerica.org

American Council for Drug Education
www.acde.org

Adapted from www.justfacts.org, a website designed to provide sexual health, alcohol and other drug education. Provided by:



The Center for Substance Abuse
Research (CESAR)
University of Maryland, College Park
4321 Hartwick Road, Suite 501
College Park, MD 20740
Phone (301) 405-9770
Fax (301) 403-8342