

5 Myths about ADHD Drugs



- Prescription stimulants are usually prescribed to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and misusing them can lead to serious health problems.
- While these drugs may help you focus, they don't help you learn better, and they won't improve your grades.
- Research has shown that students who abuse prescription stimulants actually have lower GPAs in high school and college than those who don't.
- Also, unlike vitamins, they require a doctor's prescription. If you take these drugs more often than directed, in too high a dose, or in some way other than by mouth, you are abusing the drug, which can lead to addiction.

Prescription stimulants—like Adderall and Ritalin—have been in the news a lot recently because some high school and college students say they take these drugs to help them study better or party longer. Prescription stimulants are usually prescribed to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and misusing them can lead to serious health problems.

Let's look at 5 myths about prescription stimulants.

Myth #1: Drugs like Ritalin and Adderall can make you smarter.

Fact: While these drugs may help you focus, they don't help you learn better, and they won't improve your grades.

Being “smart” is about improving your ability to master new skills, concepts, and ideas. Like a muscle, the brain gets stronger through exercise. Learning strengthens brain connections through repetition and practice to enhance cognition—“smartness”—over a lifetime. Shortcuts, like abusing prescription stimulants, do not “exercise” the brain.

Research has shown that students who abuse prescription stimulants actually have lower GPAs in high school and college than those who don't.

Myth #2: Prescription stimulants are just “brain vitamins.”

Fact: Unlike vitamins, these drugs contain ingredients that can change brain chemistry and may have serious side effects.

Also, unlike vitamins, they require a doctor's prescription. If you take these drugs more often than directed, in too high a dose, or in some way other than by mouth, you are abusing the drug, which can lead to addiction.

Myth #3: These drugs can't hurt you.

Fact: Prescription stimulants like Adderall or Ritalin are safe and effective when prescribed for people with ADHD and used properly. But the same drugs, when used by someone without ADHD, can be dangerous.

Stimulants taken without a medical reason can disrupt brain communication. When used improperly or in excess, they can cause mood swings and loss of sleep, and can increase your blood pressure, heart rate, and body temperature.



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Remember!

If you are diagnosed with ADHD, stimulants the doctor prescribes for you can help. But always be sure to take the medication exactly as directed—no more, no less.

And don't help your friends or family members abuse prescription drugs by sharing your pills with them.

Myth #4: Taking someone else's prescription—just once in a while—is okay.

Fact: Doctors prescribe medicine based on your weight, symptoms, and body chemistry. Doctors may adjust how much you take or change to a different medication to better treat symptoms or respond to side effects.

When you take a stimulant prescribed for a friend or family member, you haven't been looked at by a doctor. The possible side effects can make you sick. Side effects include elevated heart rate, dizziness, and fainting—or, even worse, heart attacks and stroke. Side effects may also include depression and exhaustion.

Myth #5: If your doctor prescribed the drug, it doesn't matter how you take it.

Fact: If you are diagnosed with ADHD, stimulants the doctor prescribes for you can help. But always be sure to take the medication exactly as directed—no more, no less.

Also, be sure to tell your doctor everything that's going on at home and at school. Combining prescription stimulants with other drugs or alcohol can be dangerous.

And don't help your friends or family members abuse prescription drugs by sharing your pills with them.

