How to avoid prescription drug misuse or abuse

Prescription medications can be effective when they are used properly, but some can be addictive and dangerous when misused. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 14 of the 20 most abused mood-altering substances in the nation are prescription drugs.

Many people become “unwitting” addicts. These are often individuals with no prior history of drug abuse, who begin using prescription drugs for a legitimate medical problem. Then, at some point they start increasing the dosage on their own because the drug makes them feel better. Gradually, the abuse becomes full-blown addiction.

Basic medication safety tips

Follow these guidelines for the safe use of any prescription medications you may use:

- Educate yourself about any prescribed or over-the-counter drug you may take, in particular the drugs that can be addictive. The most frequent offenders are pain and nerve medications, tranquilizers, diet pills and cold medicines. Before taking any medication ask what is in the medication and what effects can be expected.
- Keep your doctor informed about all medications you are taking, including over-the-counter medications.
- Be sure to use medication only as prescribed. If you have questions or concerns, contact your doctor.
- Get a second opinion before going on a medication for any length of time. Long-term use for more than 27 consecutive days can be addictive (This does not apply to medications that simply provide what the body is deficient in, such as insulin, thyroid, and antidepressants).
- Low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and feeling of isolation and detachment are the most common problems associated with drug dependency. Seek professional help or other resources to help you solve these problems, instead of covering up the symptoms with medication. Make yourself a priority and take care of your physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

Your EAP is here to help

If you or a dependent needs help to overcome a problem with prescription drug abuse or addiction, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can assist you with CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals and information. EAP counselors are specially trained to help people get the right help for a problem with prescription medications or other drugs, and can help you determine the extent of your problem and what treatment is needed. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help. All EAP services are free and strictly confidential.