Proper Use of Prescription Stimulant Medication
How Widespread Is the Improper Use of Stimulants?

Although there is no way of knowing exactly how often stimulants are used improperly, a 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted by US Department of Health and Human Services identified the following estimates.

**IMPROPER USE OF STIMULANTS**

- **8.9 million** people aged 12 or older were current users of illicit drugs, of which **1.4 million** were using stimulants for nonmedical use.

- More than half of people using prescription pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives for nonmedical use said they got them “from a friend or relative for free.”

* Illicit drugs include cocaine/crack, heroin, hallucinogens, and inhalants, as well as the nonmedical use of prescription-type pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives. Marijuana/hashish was excluded from the estimate.

As with any medication, proper use is important. Prescription stimulant medications such as amphetamine and methylphenidate are controlled substances (regulated by the federal government) and need to be handled in a serious manner because they have a high risk of abuse and dependence.

It is also important to know that selling or giving away your medication may harm others and it is illegal. That’s why it’s important to understand the appropriate use of stimulants.
As you learn how stimulants can be improperly used, here are some suggestions on how to encourage proper use.

The key to proper stimulant use is being AWARE. Here’s a simple way to remember the most important steps in preventing the misuse, abuse, and diversion of stimulant medication in yourself, your family, or friends. Read on for more information about misuse, abuse, and diversion.

**What You Should Know About Improper Stimulant Use**

Prescription stimulants should never be used without a prescription. No matter what term you use to describe it, using a prescription medication in a way that does not follow the prescription, or that is not yours, can be dangerous—and it’s against the law.

Terms used to describe improper stimulant use include misuse, abuse, and diversion.

**Misuse**

Misuse of a prescription stimulant happens any time the medicine is used in a way that is different from the doctor’s instructions. Misuse could be:

- Taking an extra pill of your own prescription because you think you need it
- Taking a friend’s prescription stimulant for your own use

**Abuse**

Using a prescription medicine to get high or taking a prescription stimulant to see how it makes you feel is considered abuse. Stimulants have a high potential for abuse, and should be used only as directed.

**Diversion**

Diversion occurs when someone other than the person whose name is on the prescription uses it. Examples are giving your medication to a friend or taking medication from a sibling.

**If you or someone you care for takes too much stimulant medication, or overdoses, call a doctor or poison control center, or call 911 right away.**

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**Be:**

- **Act** to ensure appropriate stimulant use
- **Watch** for any unusual behavioral or physical signs
- **Assess** your and your child’s medication and symptoms often
- **Regulate** and monitor your or your child’s medication use
- **Educate** yourself and your child on the dangers of improper use
Be Safe With Medication

If you or your child has been prescribed stimulant medication, be sure to take it exactly as directed by the doctor. Store the medication in a safe place. Count the medication regularly to make sure no one else is using it. Selling or giving away prescription medications may harm others and is against the law. There are state and federal laws that punish the misuse, abuse, and diversion of stimulant medications.

For more information talk to the doctor or visit the following resources:

- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) at nimh.nih.gov
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) at nida.nih.gov
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at samhsa.gov
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) at dea.gov

Talk to the Doctor

When the doctor prescribes a stimulant medication, it is essential for you to understand the proper use of the medication.

Make sure to ask the doctor about the following:

- What steps can I take to help ensure the stimulant medication is taken correctly?
- What should I do if I suspect a loved one is misusing, abusing, or diverting his or her medication?

Working Together to Ensure Proper Stimulant Use

We at Shire are dedicated to working with health care professionals and patients to help ensure the proper use of stimulant medications. We are committed to creating materials to help educate and promote the appropriate use of stimulant medications.
Keep this guide as a handy resource for proper use of prescription medication.

This resource is sponsored by Shire Pharmaceuticals.