



## DID YOU KNOW? Alcohol Abuse Makes Prescription Drug Abuse More Likely Jan 12

### Those under 25 are particularly vulnerable to dual abuse

Men and women with alcohol use disorders (AUDs) are 18 times more likely to report nonmedical use of prescription drugs than people who don't drink at all, according to researchers at the University of Michigan. Dr. Sean Esteban McCabe and colleagues documented this link in two NIDA-funded studies; they also discovered that young adults were most at risk for concurrent or simultaneous abuse of both alcohol and prescription drugs.

When alcohol and prescription drugs are used simultaneously, severe medical problems can result, including alcohol poisoning, unconsciousness, respiratory depression, and sometimes death. In addition, college students who drank and took prescription drugs simultaneously were more likely than those who did not to blackout, vomit, and engage in other risky behaviors such as drunk driving and unplanned sex.

Dr. McCabe emphasizes that many people who simultaneously drink alcohol and use prescription medications have no idea how dangerous the interactions between these substances can be. "Passing out is a protective mechanism that stops people from drinking when they are approaching potentially dangerous blood alcohol concentrations," he explains. "But if you take stimulants when you drink, you can potentially override this mechanism and this could lead to life-threatening consequences."

"The problem is that many people think that, because prescription drugs have been tested and approved by the Food and Drug Administration, they are always safe to use; but they are safe only when used under the direction of a physician for the purpose for which they are prescribed."



You've probably seen this warning on medicines you've taken. The danger is real. Mixing alcohol with certain medications can cause nausea and vomiting, headaches, drowsiness, fainting, or loss of coordination.

It also can put you at risk for internal bleeding, heart problems, and difficulties in breathing. In addition to these dangers, alcohol can make a medication less effective or even useless, or it may make the medication harmful or toxic to your body.

**Remember...Mixing alcohol and medicines puts you at risk for dangerous reactions. Protect yourself by avoiding alcohol if you are taking a medication and don't know its effect. To learn more about a medicine and whether it will interact with alcohol, talk to your pharmacist or other health care provider.**

**To view a list of SOME medications that can cause harm when taken with alcohol:**

<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Medicine/medicine.htm>