Risk Factors

Prescription drug abuse cuts across gender, age and race; however certain groups may be more at risk.

Youth

Abuse of prescription drugs is rising fast among youth. Young people have a perception that prescriptions are safe because a doctor prescribed them. They also become addicted more easily than adults. Read more about Youth.

- Each day 2500 teens abuse prescription drugs for the first time.
- One in five teens abuse prescription drugs.
- Prescriptions are the drug of choice among 12- and 13-year-olds.

Seniors

Seniors are at risk due to long-term use of addictive drugs such as those for joint pain and insomnia. They are also more likely to be over-medicated, especially those who get prescriptions from more than one physician or pharmacy. Substance abuse in older adults often goes unrecognized. Read more about Seniors

- Nearly 30% of those aged 57-85 use at least five prescriptions.
- Prescriptions are the most commonly abused drug among those aged 65 or older.
- By 2020, the number of persons needing treatment for substance abuse will double among those aged 50 or older.

Military

- Abuse of prescription drugs among active duty service members tripled from 2005-2008 (4% to 11%).
- Prescription drugs were involved in almost one-third of the active duty suicides in 2009.
- Pain relievers were the most commonly abused prescription.

Read more about Veterans