



# Mixing drugs, alcohol and prescription medications

**People who are taking prescription opioid medications for pain need to be especially careful when it comes to mixing these drugs with other substances. For example, when the intake of opioids is combined with alcohol and/or other drugs, it can result in a very dangerous, life-threatening health crisis.**

**The combination of alcohol and over-the-counter medications can lead to severe health problems.**

## The effects of drug and alcohol interactions

Alcohol and opioids have calming and relaxing qualities that can cause a person to easily underestimate the effect that these substances can have on the body. Drinking alcohol substantially increases the depressive effects that opioids and other narcotic painkillers have on the central nervous system. Drinking alcohol can also greatly increase the urge to consume opioids, so a dangerous situation can occur when the substances are combined. If other drugs such as antidepressants, antianxiety medications, stimulants, antihistamines, muscle relaxants or other sedatives are added to the mix, the potential outcomes are even worse. All of these substances slow breathing, and their combined effects can lead to life-threatening respiratory depression.

Possible reactions of opioids with alcohol and other drugs include:

- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Respiratory failure
- Severe headache
- Impaired motor control
- Hallucinations, unusual behavior
- Memory problems
- Cardiac arrest
- Increased risk of overdose

Given the potential severity of the reactions to drug and alcohol interaction, such ill-advised substance use can result in blackouts, slips or falls, coma, and even death.

## **When in doubt, don't mix**

If take prescription pain medication, you are at risk for dangerous drug interactions if you choose to drink alcohol. Pain medications, alcohol and other drugs can be an extremely deadly combination, so it is best to never mix them.

## **Contact Us**

Your program provides access to tools and other resources online or call us directly to speak to a professional counselor who is available everyday and at any time to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

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