

Drug Fact Sheet

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Hydrocodone

Overview

Hydrocodone is the most frequently prescribed opioid in the United States and is associated with more drug abuse and diversion than any other licit or illicit opioid. It is an orally active agent most frequently prescribed for the treatment of moderate to moderately severe pain. It's analgesic potency is similar to morphine. Hydrocodone is also an antitussive (cough suppressant) agent with an efficacy similar to that of codeine. There are numerous brand and generic hydrocodone products marketed in the United States. All are combination products. The most frequently prescribed combination is hydrocodone and acetaminophen (for example, Vicodin®, Lorcet®, and Lortab®). Other examples of combination products include those containing aspirin (Lortab ASA®), ibuprofen (Vicoprofen®) and antihistamines (Hycomine®).



Street names

Hydro, Norco, Vikes

Looks like

Hydrocodone has a chemical structure that is related to that of codeine and morphine. Hydrocodone combination products are formulated in tablets, capsules, and syrups.

Methods of abuse

Most often these drugs are abused by oral rather than intravenous administration.

Affect on mind

Hydrocodone, like most other opioids, induces euphoria, sedation and alters the perception of painful stimuli.

Affect on body

Hydrocodone can cause drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, constipation, urinary retention and in higher amounts, depressed respiration. Long term use can lead to dependence and addiction. Withdrawal symptoms include restlessness, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, and vomiting.

Drugs causing similar effects

Morphine, heroin, oxycodone, codeine, propoxyphene, fentanyl, and hydromorphone.

Overdose effects

Like other opioids, hydrocodone overdose is associated with cold and clammy skin, severely constricted pupils, and slow breathing that can lead to a loss of consciousness and death. Large doses of hydrocodone in combination with acetaminophen may cause severe liver damage.

Legal status in the United States

Hydrocodone is a Schedule II narcotic that is marketed in multi-ingredient Schedule III products. The Schedule III drug products have accepted medical use in treatment and have a moderate to low physical dependence or high psychological dependence.

Common places of origin

A legitimate pharmaceutical, Hydrocodone is found in the illicit market most often in tablets, capsules and liquid form. Tablets containing acetaminophen are the most frequently encountered products. Hydrocodone can be obtained from illicit internet sources, altered or fraudulent prescriptions, doctor-shopping, drug theft, and from friends or acquaintances.

This content came from a United States Government, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) website, www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com.

