

PRESCRIPTION SEDATIVES & TRANQUILIZERS

What are Prescription Sedatives & Tranquilizers?

Prescription medications that act as central nervous system depressants. Barbiturates are prescription sedatives or "sleeping pills" and benzodiazepines are prescription "tranquilizers."

What are the street names/slang terms for Prescription Sedatives & Tranquilizers?

Mebaral, Quaaludes, Xanax and Valium (benzodiazepines), Nembutal.

What do they look like?

Multi-colored tablets and capsules; some can be in liquid form.

How are they used?

Medically, barbiturates are prescribed for acute anxiety, tension and sleep disorders. Benzodiazepines are prescribed for anxiety, acute stress reactions, and panic attacks. When abused, they are swallowed or injected.

What are their short-term effects?

Prescription sedatives and tranquilizers can cause euphoria. They also slow normal brain function, which may result in slurred speech, shallow breathing, sluggishness, fatigue, disorientation and lack of coordination or dilated pupils. During the first few days of taking a prescribed sedative or tranquilizer, a person usually feels sleepy and uncoordinated, but as the body becomes accustomed to the effects of the drug, these feelings begin to disappear. Higher doses cause impairment of memory, judgment and coordination, irritability, paranoid and suicidal ideation. Some people experience a paradoxical reaction to these drugs and can become agitated or aggressive. Using prescription sedatives and tranquilizers with other substances - particularly alcohol - can slow breathing, or slow both the heart and respiration, and possibly lead to death.

What are their long-term effects?

Continued use can lead to physical dependence and - when use is reduced or stopped abruptly- withdrawal symptoms may occur. Because all prescription sedatives and tranquilizers work by slowing the brain's activity, when an individual stops taking them, there can be a rebound effect, possibly leading to seizures and other harmful consequences. Tolerance to the drug's effects can also occur, meaning that larger doses are needed to achieve similar effects as those experienced initially. This may lead users to take higher doses and risk the occurrence of an overdose. Addiction can also occur, meaning that users continue to take these drugs despite their harmful consequences.

What are their federal classifications?

Schedule II

Source

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

