



# FACT SHEET ON PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE IN THE ELDERLY

1. Many older persons abuse prescription medications.
2. Antianxiety medications (benzodiazepines) and pain medications (narcotics) are common drugs of abuse in older persons.
3. Many older persons exceed the dose of psychoactive medications prescribed by their physician.
4. Some older persons request duplicative prescriptions of psychotropic medications from different doctors.
5. Older persons have the highest per capita use of anxiety and sedative medications (benzodiazepines) in the United States.
6. Older caregivers are frequent users of psychoactive medications.
7. Adverse drug reactions, i.e., drug side effects produced by psychotropic medications, are common reasons for hospitalization of older persons.
8. Anti-anxiety medications are addictive, i.e., benzodiazepines like Valium and Xanax.
9. Older persons have falls, injury, confusion, and motor vehicle accidents when they use nerve pills.
10. Benzodiazepines, e.g., Valium, Librium, Xanax, are not effective long-term treatment for sleep problems (insomnia).
11. Chronic benzodiazepine therapy should be used in specific clinical conditions like generalized anxiety disorder or panic disorder.
12. Older persons should avoid long-term narcotic therapy without a careful pain evaluation and management of the medication.
13. Long-term use of narcotic medications causes addiction, e.g., Darvon, Codeine.
14. Darvon has the same analgesic value as Tylenol.
15. Long-term narcotic therapy is appropriate to control pain of dying patients in sufficient dose.