

The Truth About Hydrocodone



— A message from Dr. Nora D. Volkow,
Director of NIDA

Dear Teacher:

While there is good news from the most recent Monitoring the Future Study showing the steady decline in the use of illicit drugs by teens over the past six years, abuse of prescription pain relievers like Vicodin® and OxyContin® remains troublingly high. This latest installment of *Heads Up* from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and Scholastic provides important information about hydrocodone, the principal ingredient in Vicodin®, and alerts students to the dangers of abusing a wide range of prescription medications.

I urge you to share this *Heads Up* article with your students, and thank you for working with NIDA to bring the facts about hydrocodone abuse and its serious consequences to your class.

Sincerely,

Nora D. Volkow, M.D.
Director of NIDA



In This Installment

- Important information about the prescription pain reliever hydrocodone.
- Consequences related to abuse of hydrocodone, especially for teens.
- Dangers of abusing other prescription medications like OxyContin®.

Assessment Tools

Use the Student Activity Reproducible on the back of this page as an assessment quiz to determine what your students have learned about hydrocodone, its risks, and the abuse of other prescription drugs.

More Information

For more information on prescription drug abuse and addiction, go to:

www.drugabuse.gov/researchreports/prescription/prescription.html

For more facts about drugs and the body, visit:

www.scholastic.com/headsup and
www.teens.drugabuse.gov

For “Monitoring the Future” survey results:

www.monitoringthefuture.org

Lesson Plan & Reproducible

Preparation: Make copies of the activity reproducible (on the other side of this page) for each student.

OBJECTIVES Students will learn about hydrocodone and the risks associated with its abuse; they will also learn about the dangers of abusing other prescription medications.

CONNECTIONS TO NATIONAL STANDARDS Life Work; Self-Regulation; Thinking and Reasoning

WHAT YOU WILL DO

- Introduce the topic of *hydrocodone abuse* by asking students if they have ever heard of Vicodin® or OxyContin®, or know what they are used for. Discuss some of the beneficial uses of pain relievers, then ask students what they think *abuse* of hydrocodone means and why it can lead to serious consequences.
- Have students read the article “The Lowdown on Hydrocodone.” Begin a discussion by asking, *What kinds of problems can arise when medications are taken*

improperly or by people other than those for whom they were prescribed? What are the dangers of mixing prescription medications with alcohol or other drugs?

- After the discussion, have students complete the reproducible again. When they have finished, reveal the correct answers.
- Wrap up the lesson by discussing with students: *How would you respond to someone who says, “All prescription drugs come from a doctor, so they must be legal—and safe?”*

ANSWERS TO STUDENT ACTIVITY REPRODUCIBLE:

1. b; 2. c; 3. d; 4. c; 5. b; 6. e; 7. d;
8. b; 9. b; 10. a.

ANSWERS TO STUDENT MAGAZINE QUESTIONS:

- Vocabulary: 1. c; 2. a; 3. b; 4. d.
Reading Comprehension: 1. c; 2. d; 3. b;
4. a; 5. b.

For printable past and current articles in the **HEADS UP** series, as well as activities and teaching support, go to www.drugabuse.gov/parent-teacher.html or www.scholastic.com/HEADSUP.

What Do You Know About Hydrocodone?

Answer the questions below to find out what you know about hydrocodone and other commonly abused prescription drugs.

- Hydrocodone is similar in potency to**
 - aspirin.
 - morphine.
 - antihistamines.
 - cough syrup.
 - allergy medicine.
- Which is not a brand name for hydrocodone?**
 - Vicodin®
 - Anexsia®
 - OxyContin®
 - Lorcet®
 - Norco®
- As an opioid, hydrocodone is**
 - extremely addictive.
 - able to slow down one's breathing.
 - particularly dangerous with alcohol.
 - all of the above
- Hydrocodone should be taken**
 - whenever you feel pain.
 - at least once a day.
 - under the close supervision of a doctor.
 - only if you are 18.
 - all of the above
- What ratio of high school seniors abused Vicodin® in 2006?**
 - 1 out of 3
 - 1 out of 10
 - 1 out of 17
 - 1 out of 40
- What key structure of the brain is involved in reward, motivation, and addiction?**
 - amygdala
 - hippocampus
 - cerebellum
 - medulla oblongata
 - nucleus acumbens
- For what health conditions are benzodiazepines prescribed?**
 - anxiety
 - panic attacks
 - acute stress reactions
 - all of the above
- For what health conditions are stimulants prescribed?**
 - fever
 - attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder
 - bronchitis
 - measles
 - the common cold
- Since prescription medication is prescribed by a doctor, it is automatically safer than illicit street drugs.**
 - true
 - false
- It is illegal to use or sell drugs prescribed for someone else.**
 - true
 - false