Profile: Oxycodone

What is oxycodone?
Oxycodone is a semi-synthetic opiate and the active ingredient in a number of prescription pain relief medications. OxyContin, a time-release formula of oxycodone, is available in doses ranging from 10 to 80 mg, and is intended for long-term relief of severe pain. The medications Percocet, Percodan, and Tylox contain small doses (2.5 to 10 mg) of oxycodone combined with other active ingredients, such as aspirin and acetaminophen. Oxycodone is a Schedule II controlled substance with high abuse potential.

How is oxycodone misused?
Those who abuse the drug generally do so in three ways: crushing the pill into a fine powder and snorting it; chewing it; or crushing and dissolving the tablets in water and injecting the solution. These methods are primarily used to defeat the time-release mechanism in OxyContin tablets, causing the active ingredient to take full effect almost immediately after ingestion. Using oxycodone like this dramatically increases the overdose risk.

Why do people misuse oxycodone?
As an opiate, oxycodone is similar to heroin. It elevates levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which is linked with pleasurable experiences. Some illicit users abuse oxycodone to achieve a euphoric high. Opiate addicts use it to control withdrawal symptoms when heroin or morphine is unavailable.

What are some street names for oxycodone?

OxyContin®
- Oxy
- OC
- Oxycottons
- Oxy 80s
- Killers

Percodan® or Percocet®
- Percs
- Percodoms

Kickers
- Blue
- Hillbilly Heroin
- Jammed—under the influence of OxyContin
What are the effects of oxycodone?
Like other narcotic medications, oxycodone can impair mental and physical abilities. Other side effects include breathing irregularity or respiratory depression, headaches, nausea, dizziness, seizures, low blood pressure, and heart failure. Overdose death is possible due to cardiac arrest or slowed breathing, especially when ingesting crushed OxyContin tablets.

Is oxycodone addictive?
Yes. Prolonged use will lead to tolerance and the need for higher doses to achieve the desired effect. Oxycodone will eventually change the brain in such a way that users cannot quit on their own. These are both symptoms of dependence. When users suddenly stop taking oxycodone, they can experience severe withdrawal symptoms, such as anxiety, nausea, insomnia, muscle pain, fever, and other flu-like symptoms.

Online Resources
Center for Substance Abuse Research
www.cesar.umd.edu
National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.nida.nih.gov
Drug Enforcement Administration Office of Diversion Control
www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov
Partnership for a Drug-Free America
www.drugfreeamerica.org
American Council for Drug Education
www.acde.org

Adapted from www.justfacts.org, a website designed to provide sexual health, alcohol and other drug education. Provided by:
The Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR)
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