

Introduction to Study Drugs:

As college students attempt to cope with their academic and social demands, some students are turning to the illegal use of study drugs as a way to increase focus and gain more energy.

The term “study drugs” came into common usage in the late 1990’s to describe drugs, particularly prescription medications, which students use to increase concentration and stamina. The term is most often associated with the illegal use of Ritalin and Adderall, or some derivative.

Students may purchase or “borrow” these drugs from friends and use them without a legal prescription, or may fail to follow the prescribed dosing schedule.

History 101:

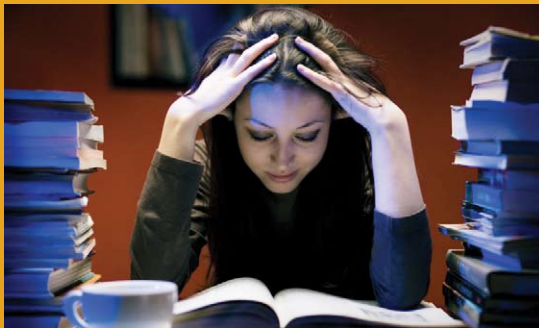
Originally, drugs like Ritalin and Adderall were used almost exclusively for the treatment of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD). These drugs typically come in pill format, and often have an extended release mechanism.

Most AD/HD medications are stimulant based*. The two most common groupings are:

- Methylphenidate based drugs - Ritalin, Concerta, Focalin, Metadate, and Methalin.
- Amphetamine based drugs – Adderall, Dexedrine, and Vyvanse.

* Strattera is a more recently developed non-stimulant based medication used to treat AD/HD.

Even though they are stimulants, when prescribed as directed by a medical provider in standard doses, these prescription drugs have been shown to assist some people diagnosed with AD/HD sustain their attention for a longer amount of time. This allows them to study or complete tasks at hand much more effectively.



Physiology: (aka Physical Effects)

Since these study drugs are stimulants, they have many different physiological effects, especially when they are combined with alcohol or other drugs. When used as prescribed, most of these side effects are tolerable, but study drug abuse can have side effects ranging from mildly uncomfortable to life threatening!

Typical Short Term Effects: insomnia, increased heart rate and respiration, dilated pupils, dry mouth, increased perspiration and flushing, decreased appetite, high blood pressure, hyperactivity, nausea and vomiting, dizziness, headaches, rashes and itching

Potential Long Term Effects: brain damage, chronic memory disturbance, chronic depression, abnormal brain development, abnormal liver function

Dangerous Effects (Long or Short Term): heart arrhythmias, stroke, tremors

One dangerous trend is crushing & snorting study drugs. This form of ingestion makes these drugs more addictive and extremely dangerous. Side effects can include:

- respiratory problems, such as destruction of the nasal and sinus cavities and lung tissue
- irregular heartbeat (heart arrhythmia)
- problems with circulation
- paranoia, delusions, or psychotic episodes
- increased aggression
- toxic shock or death, in extreme cases

It is possible for physical and psychological dependence to result from extended use of these drugs. Users may experience withdrawal symptoms if they stop using the drugs after a few weeks of repeated use.

Criminal Justice: (The Modern Day System)

Although many students think study drugs are “safe” because they are prescribed by a doctor, their misuse or abuse can lead to serious legal consequences.

Adderall and Ritalin (and their derivative medications) are classified as **Schedule II** drugs by the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

This classification comes from the drugs' high propensity for misuse, abuse, and dependence. **It also puts them in the same class of drugs as cocaine and methamphetamine.**

That means a person risks being arrested and charged with a felony (which may include penalties such as large fines and/or jail time) if they have or use these substances without a prescription.



Philosophy: (What's the meaning of all this)

Although study drugs can be extraordinarily helpful for people who legitimately need them, using these drugs as a regular study aid can be harmful to a person's health and future. There are many other healthier, and safer, ways for a person to manage their time and scheduling demands.

If students feel they have a legitimate study skill or concentration problem, or if they think they might really need medications, it's possible they have an undiagnosed disorder. They should see their doctor to discuss their situation.