

# Opioids and Benzodiazepines

## JUST SAY “NO” TO THE COMBO

Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines is a dangerous combination<sup>1</sup> -

- Between 2001 and 2013, concurrent use of opioids and benzodiazepine drugs increased 80%
- Concurrent users had twice the risk of an emergency department visit or inpatient admission for opioid overdose
- About 30% of fatal opioid overdoses occurred in people also using benzodiazepines

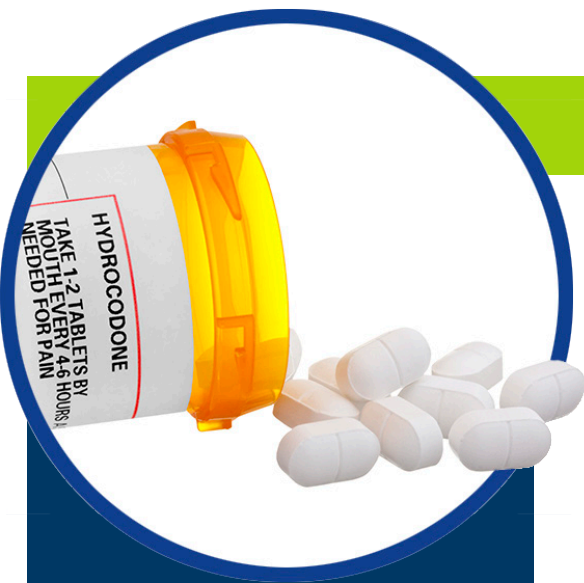
In 2016, the FDA issued a [serious warning](#) against concurrent use of these drug classes<sup>2</sup>

### WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?

- Opioids and Benzodiazepines both depress the central nervous system
- Common side effects of opioids and benzodiazepines include drowsiness, dizziness, and dependence/misuse/abuse
- Concurrent use, even at prescribed doses, increases the risk of significant respiratory depression and increases the risk of opioid overdose

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Use your state’s prescription drug monitoring database to identify all controlled drugs patients may be taking
- Use [opioid screening tools](#) to identify patients at high risk for adverse events, dependence
- Consider [non-narcotic alternatives](#) and [non-pharmacologic alternatives](#) to treatment
- If the drugs must be used, use minimum effective doses for the shortest duration possible
- Consider all drug therapy as part of a comprehensive patient-centered care plan
- Teach patients to [recognize opioid adverse effects](#) and symptoms of overdose such as sedation, difficulty breathing
- The [FDA recommends](#) that medication assisted treatment of addiction with opioids/opioid analogues should not be withheld in persons also on benzodiazepines or other CNS depressant drugs. However, due to the increased risk of serious side effects, patients on combined therapy should be monitored very closely<sup>3</sup>



# 80%

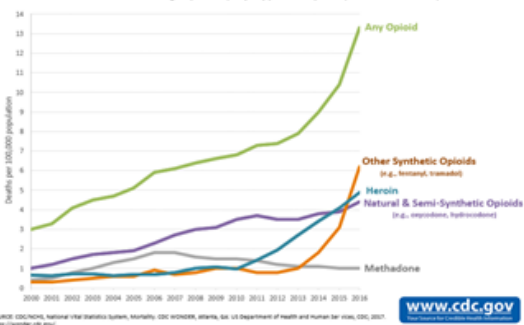
increase in concurrent use of opioids and benzodiazepine drugs from 2001 to 2013



# 30%

of fatal opioid overdoses occur in people also on benzodiazepines

Overdose Deaths Involving Opioids, by Type of Opioid, United States, 2000-2016



1. Sun EC, et al. Association between concurrent use of prescription opioids and benzodiazepines and overdose: a retrospective analysis. *BMJ*. 2017;356:j760. [cited 2018 1.31.18 Available from: [www.bmj.com/content/356/bmj.j760](http://www.bmj.com/content/356/bmj.j760)
2. <https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm518473.htm>
3. <https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm575307.htm>

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