



Uniting the communities of Southeastern Connecticut in order to reduce the impact of substance abuse and other addictive behaviors.

- Serving*  
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# Take Action

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## Misuse of Legal Drugs

Non-medical use and abuse of prescription and over the counter medications is a growing problem in the United States. According to the 2008 Monitoring the Future survey sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 15% of high school seniors reported having used a prescription drug non-medically in the past year. NIDA estimates that 20% of the US population has abused a prescription medication in their lifetime.

The most commonly abused prescription medications generally fall into one of the following three categories:

- 1) Opioids like Oxycontin® and Vicodin® which are usually prescribed to treat pain
- 2) Central nervous system depressants like Valium® and Xanax® which are usually prescribed to treat anxiety and sleep disorders
- 3) Stimulants like Ritalin® which is usually prescribed for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder

Certain medications available over the counter (OTC) also have the potential to be abused for their psychoactive properties. Dextromethorphan (DXM), found in certain cough and cold remedies is probably the most commonly abused OTC product. Other OTC products which can be abused include sleep aids like Unisom®, antihistamines like Benadryl® and motion sickness medications such as Dramamine®.

Unfortunately, many individuals perceive misuse of prescription and OTC medications as less risky than use of illicit drugs. May do not realize that abuse of these legal medications can have dangerous, even lethal consequences. Just because these medications are available from a doctor and in some cases over the counter does not mean that they do not have the potential to cause harm. Opioids can cause respiratory depression and death with just a single large dose. Discontinuing or reducing use of depressants has been associated with seizures. Stimulants can cause dangerous elevations in body temperature, irregular heart beat and seizures. It is important to remember that physicians go to school for many years in order to learn how to use these powerful medications to safely help their patients.

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## Misuse of Legal Medications—continued

*Continued from page 1*

In some cases an individuals may become dependent upon a medication after initially taking it for a valid medical reason. For others without a prescription, they may “try” someone else’s leftovers and get hooked. For this reason it is important to always follow your doctor’s instructions. In general you should use up your entire prescription. However, in some cases you may have some extras leftover.

To help reduce the impact of leftover medications on the environment and to reduce the risk of abuse, the US Food and Drug Administration and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy issued the following guidelines in 2007.

Do not flush prescription medications down the toilet unless the patient information insert specifically instructs you to do so.

Dispose of drugs in regular household trash only after mixing them with an undesirable substance like coffee grounds or kitty litter

Place the mixture of drugs and undesirable substance in a container like a sealable bag or can.

Take advantage of community drug take back programs which allow individuals to take unused medications to a central location for proper disposal.



Source: [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

## National Night Out

National Night Out (NNO) is an annual crime and drug prevention event sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch (NATW). National Night Out is designed to heighten crime and drug prevention awareness, generate support for and participation in local crime prevention programs, strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships and let criminals know that neighborhoods are organized and fighting back.

The 26th Annual National Night Out will take place on **Tuesday August 4, 2009**. Last year’s event included more than 37 million people from more than 15,000 communities throughout the United States.

To learn more about NNO or to find out how to participate visit [www.natw.org/nno/index.html](http://www.natw.org/nno/index.html)

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## In The Know

### What you should know about Salvia divinorum

*Local data suggest that Salvia use may be on the rise among youth in Southeastern Connecticut. Read on to learn more about this emerging drug threat.*



Salvia divinorum is a hallucinogenic herb in the mint family which grows natively in the Sierra Mazateca region of Mexico. It is used by native Mazatec tribes as a healing and divining tool. It is generally abused in the United States because of its ability to cause hallucinations. The component in Salvia which is responsible for its hallucinogenic effects is Salvinorin A (also called Divinorin A) which is active at the brain's kappa opioid receptors.

Neither Salvia nor Salvinorin A is listed as a controlled substance under the US Federal Controlled Substances Act. However, the US Drug Enforcement Agency has identified Salvia as a drug of concern and is considering classifying it as a Schedule 1 drug like LSD or heroin. At this time, 12 states prohibit salvia growth or sales of the plant and/or extracts. Legislation is pending in an additional 13 states. Earlier this year SERAC provided information about Salvia to the General Law Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly where some legislators are considering introduction of legislation to regulate the sale and distribution of Salvia products.

Salvia may be grown domestically or imported from Mexico. In addition to being available at local shops (head shops and tobacco shops), plants, dried leaves and extracts are available online. It is traditionally ingested by chewing fresh leaves or by drinking tea made from the leaves. However, the dried leaves can also be smoked.



The effects of salvia usually begin within minutes and can include sensations of traveling through time and space, floating flying; twisting or spinning. Visual hallucinations of patterns and shapes also reportedly occur when the eyes are closed. Physical effects of salvia ingestion include dizziness, nausea, lack of coordination, slurred speech and decreased heart rate. Data regarding the long term effects of salvia use are not available.

According to National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2006 estimates:

1.8 million people 12 and older had used Salvia at least once in their lives

750,000 individuals had used it within the past year.

Data suggest that young adults are 3 times more likely than youth between the ages of 12 and 17 to have used Salvia in the past year. Use is reportedly more common among males than females.

Due to increasing coverage of Salvia in the media and increasing discussion and video sharing on sites like YouTube the National Institute on Drug Abuse stresses the possibility of an increase in the level of Salvia abuse in the United States and Europe.

Source: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/Infofacts/salvia.html>  
<http://www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/drugs/salvia.as>  
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/pdf/monographs/71.pdf>

## What is Happening?

### July

4 Independence Day

### August

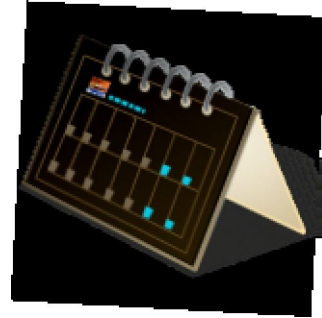
4 26th Annual National Night Out  
[www.natw.org/nno/](http://www.natw.org/nno/)

### September

1-30 National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month  
[www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov)

6-12 National Suicide Prevention Month  
[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

26 Recovery Walks—Bushnell park, Hartford  
[www.ccar.us](http://www.ccar.us)



We're on the web!  
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