

# PRESCRIPTION FOR DISCHARGE

Zero Tolerance. Infinite Risk.

## Five Things you Need to Know to Avoid Misuse of Prescription Drugs

From: Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Office

Did you know that the Navy's zero tolerance policy for drug abuse applies to the misuse of prescription drugs? According to the Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Office (NADAP), misuse of prescription drugs includes taking medicine for a purpose other than prescribed, taking medication that hasn't been prescribed to you and wrongfully possessing or distributing prescription drugs.

Many Sailors don't realize that using someone else's prescription or taking the drugs outside of the intended purpose or timeframe is misuse of those medications with serious implications for the Sailor. Although prescription drugs are a legal, safe method of treating injury and illness when taken as prescribed by a physician, improper use is both illegal and dangerous—and in some cases deadly.

To prevent prescription misuse among Sailors and Marines, NADAP's "Prescription for Discharge" campaign provides resources to educate Sailors, Marines and their families on how to safely use prescription drugs and of the health and career risks of misuse.

The campaign's five tips to avoid misusing prescription drugs are 1.) take correctly, 2.) report promptly, 3.) dispose properly, 4.) never share, and 5.) tell a friend.

First and foremost, it's important to follow your doctor's orders and prescription instructions as directed. Health providers prescribe specific drugs and doses based on an individual's history and medical needs, and taking the drugs outside of that supervision could result in disciplinary actions and serious health consequences.

Second, ensure that both Navy Medical and your command are aware of your current prescriptions. Sailors who test positive for prescription drugs without current, valid prescriptions will be subject to disciplinary action and may be processed for administrative separation from the Navy. It's critical for Sailors who have valid prescriptions to report them to Navy Medical and their command immediately so that their records can be updated prior to drug testing.

Third, once your condition has improved and your doctor

has cleared you to stop taking your medication, it's important to quickly dispose of the medication to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands. You can place unused or expired medications in a small plastic bag with used coffee grounds or another undesirable substance and throw the bag in the trash. Don't forget to cross out personal information on your prescription labels before recycling the containers.

Fourth, never share prescriptions with a friend, shipmate or family member. Using someone else's meds or giving pills to friends or shipmates can result in severe health and career consequences, including dishonorable discharge from the Navy.

Lastly, tell a friend. By telling at least one person you know about the four steps outlined above, you can help maintain fleet readiness and prevent the misuse of prescription drugs among your shipmates.

To further prevent prescription drugs from falling into the wrong hands, the U.S. Navy partners with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) by participating in National Take-Back Day held twice-yearly in April and October. Take-Back Day events provide an opportunity to turn in your unused or expired medications to your Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) or local drop-off site anonymously and free of charge.

Collection sites can be found by going to [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov) and clicking on the "Got Drugs?" banner at the top of the home page. For more information on the participating MTFs, you can contact the hospitals directly.

If you or someone you know may have a problem with prescription drug misuse, NADAP encourages you to speak with your command drug abuse prevention officer or doctor, or call 1-866-U-ASK-NPC.

Navy personnel can find more information about the Prescription for Discharge campaign, including posters and flyers for medical facilities, leadership talking points and a medical provider toolkit, on the NADAP website, [www.nadap.navy.mil](http://www.nadap.navy.mil).