

# INFO SHEET

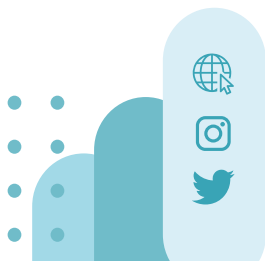
## MEDICINES: USE AND ADDICTION

### DEAR READERS!

Medicines help us. They are important and necessary. They can make us healthy and help us, for example against pain. But some medicines can be addictive.

It is therefore important to be careful when prescribing and taking medicines.

With this information sheet, we would like to inform you about this risk.



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[dieverschwiegenesucht2\\_1](#)

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### FACT BOX ADDICTION

Addicted people have a very strong inner urge for a certain state.

They achieve this state either

- through substances, like tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs, medication
- or through a certain behaviour as it might be gambling or shopping.

Addicted people must give in to this urge again and again. If they don't, they get very unpleasant mental or physical problems.

For example, pain, anxiety, insomnia or confusion.

### FACT BOX ADDICTION TO MEDICINES

- Addiction to medicines is a disease.
- Addicted people have a strong craving for "their" medicines. They can only manage their everyday life with these medicines.
- In Austria, about 150,000 people are addicted to medication.
- Many addicted people do not even know that they are addicted, because doctors do prescribe the drugs.
- Anyone can become addicted to medication.
- Women and older people are particularly often addicted to medication.

## USAGE AND ADDICTION ON MEDICINES

Medicines relieve or cure health problems. These can be mental or physical problems.

When medicines work well against such problems, people often take them for too long. Sometimes they do not stop taking them at all. A side effect can then lead to an addiction on a medicine.

It is always important that doctors are careful about the medicines they give you. And that you know how to take these medicines.

## WHAT CAN I DO MYSELF?

- **Have a conversation with your doctor:**
  - Do I still need this medicine?
  - How long should I continue taking this medicine?
  - Are there other options besides taking medication?
- **Get a second medical opinion.** Talk to other doctors about your illnesses and medications.

## REASON FOR AN ADDICTION ON MEDICATION

There is usually a mental or physical problem at the beginning. This problem is treated with medication. If you take a medicine for too long, an addiction can be the consequence. Some medicines can lead to an addiction after only 2 weeks. But there are huge differences.

## SIGNS OF ADDICTION

- Your medicine is no longer working as well. You need more of it to get the same effect.
- You have a strong urge to take "your" medicine.
- Signs of addiction if you stop taking your medicine:
  - Restlessness, insomnia, anxiety
  - Cramps, great sadness, confusion.

These signs are called withdrawal symptoms.

Addiction to certain medicines can lead to memory problems.

You may also develop dementia more easily.

## PAINKILLERS, TRANQUILLISERS AND SLEEPING PILLS

Many medicines for anxiety, stress or insomnia can be addictive. They work well, but you can become addicted after a short time. But medicines that make you awake or nasal sprays can also be addictive. This also concerns medicines that help people to stop smoking.

## HOW CAN I APPROACH OTHERS ABOUT THIS, WHICH MAY BE ADDICTED?

Talk to these people.  
For example, say:

- I have the impression that your medication is no longer ONLY good for you.
- Do you feel that you always must have your medication with you?

## TREATMENT

- It may be, that you should stop taking a medicine. But in this case medical support is important.
- **Never** stop taking your medication suddenly and on your own!  
There is a risk of severe withdrawal symptoms!

## SELF-TEST FOR AN ADDICTION TO MEDICATION

You can use this test for a medical consultation.

### Attention!

You cannot use this test to decide for yourself whether you are dependent or not.

Please discuss your results in a medical consultation.

If you answered 'true' to more than 2 questions, we strongly recommend a medical consultation. Find out together whether you are dependent on medication.

Do you only manage your everyday life with medication?

In that case, it is important and makes sense for you to get advice and support.

Here you will find a list of counselling centres in Styria, where you can get help:

[www.jukus.at/gesundheit/infoblatt](http://www.jukus.at/gesundheit/infoblatt)

1. I have trouble sleeping without medication.

true       not true

2. To stay on the safe side, I always have enough tablets at home.

true       not true

3. I would be happy with myself if I didn't take medication.

true       not true

4. There are situations that I can't manage without medication.

true       not true

5. Other people think that I have problems with medication.

true       not true

6. I feel that I can do more with medication.

true       not true



You can find an overview of Styrian counseling centers and the sources on [www.jukus.at/gesundheit/infoblatt](http://www.jukus.at/gesundheit/infoblatt) or with the QR-Code.



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