

What Happens if Alcohol and Prescription Opioids Are Taken Together?

Mixing alcohol with prescription opioids (like Vicodin or Percocet) is dangerous. Both of these substances slow (depress) your body's central nervous system. This causes your heart rate and breathing to slow down. Taking alcohol and opioids together can more than double this effect on your body.¹

Dose Dumping²

Most prescription opioids are designed to release slowly into your body. However, alcohol speeds up this process and can cause dose dumping. Dose dumping is the quick, unintentional release of a large amount or all of a drug into your body.

Liver Damage¹

Some prescription opioids contain acetaminophen. Acetaminophen harms your body's liver. Liver damage increases significantly if opioids are mixed with alcohol.

Memory Loss¹

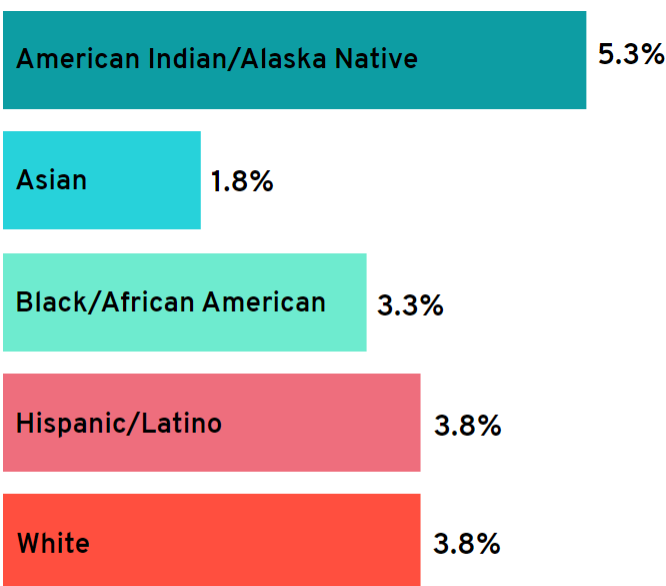
Both alcohol and opioids make it harder for your brain to form new memories. This becomes worse if alcohol or opioids are taken at high doses. Mixing alcohol with opioids can quickly lead to memory loss that is similar to dementia.



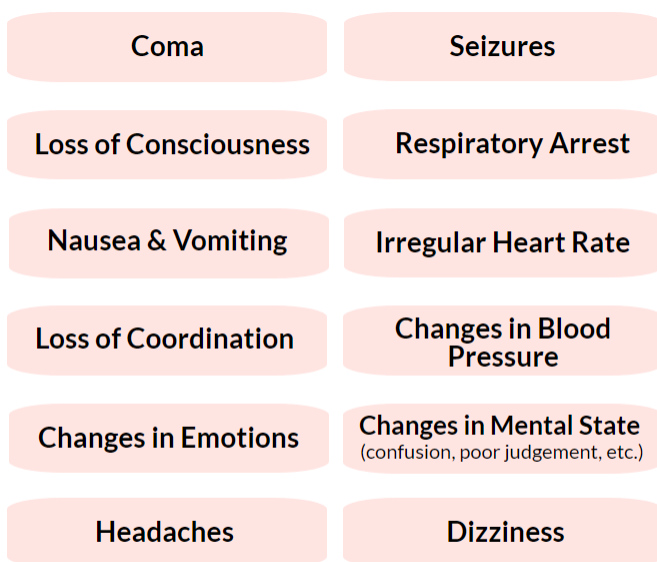
People who binge drink (have more than 4 or 5 drinks in a row) are 70% more likely than people who do not drink alcohol to misuse prescription opioids.⁴



Misuse of Pain Relievers* in Past Year Among People Age 18 or Older, 2019²



Symptoms of Mixing Alcohol With Opioids Include:¹



*Pain relievers include all prescription pain relievers and are not limited to only opioids.

Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center #5-140-0921



1. What happens when you mix alcohol with prescription opiates? American Addiction Centers Desert Hope Treatment Center Web site. <https://deserthopetreatment.com/addiction-guide/polydrug-use/mixing-alcohol-and-drugs/>. Published September 29, 2016. Accessed July 20, 2021.
2. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. Results from the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: detailed tables. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>. Published September 11, 2020. Accessed July 20, 2021.
3. Gudín JA, Mogali S, Jones JD, Comer SD. Risks, management, and monitoring of combination opioid, benzodiazepines, and/or alcohol use. *Postgrad Med*. 2013;125(4):115-130. doi:10.3810/pgm.2013.07.2684.
4. Esser MB, Guy GP Jr, Zhang K, Brewer RD. Binge drinking and prescription opioid misuse in the U.S., 2012-2014. *Am J Prev Med*. 2019; 57(2):197-208. doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2019.02.025.