



Texas Rehab Experts Warn: Drowsiness Can Be a Silent Sign of Overdose

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Drowsiness is often dismissed as harmless. A long day, poor sleep, or a medication doing its job. But a new blog from San Antonio Recovery Center (SARC) warns that sleepiness tied to drugs or alcohol can signal something far more dangerous. The article, "Can Drugs Make You Sleepy? When Drowsiness Becomes a Medical Emergency," examines how certain substances slow the body down and when that slowdown crosses into overdose territory.

"Drowsiness is a side effect of dozens, if not hundreds of different medications and substances," the blog explains. "It can even be caused by some forms of substance use." According to SARC's clinical team, the concern isn't fatigue itself. It's mistaking overdose symptoms for ordinary exhaustion.

That distinction matters more than ever. Over the past three years, overdose deaths in Texas have risen by more than 60 percent. Many of those overdoses involved depressant substances, which slow breathing, dull responsiveness, and can push the body toward shutdown. As the blog notes, "Sleepiness as a side effect has the potential to be life-threatening if you don't know what you're looking for."

The article explains why drugs cause drowsiness. The brain relies on a balance of chemicals to regulate alertness, mood, and sleep. Some substances reduce stimulating chemicals. Others increase calming ones. Either way, the result is the same: the body slows, reaction time drops, and awareness fades. "These different substances generally slow the body down," the blog states, "shifting the brain into a headspace similar to that of before you're about to fall asleep."

The post also clarifies which prescription medications are most commonly linked to drowsiness. Instead of overwhelming readers with a long list of drugs, it focuses on categories. Depressants, antihistamines, antidepressants that affect serotonin, and melatonin all appear, along with familiar examples. This framing helps explain why side effects can vary so widely from person to person.

Illicit substances are also addressed. The blog explains that depressants such as opioids, benzodiazepines, alcohol, and heroin often cause immediate sleepiness, while stimulants like cocaine or methamphetamine lead to exhaustion after the drug leaves the system. Mixing substances, especially outside medical guidance, dramatically increases risk.

The most critical section of the article focuses on recognizing an overdose. "There is a difference between general drowsiness and the unresponsive state that comes with overdoses," the blog explains. Overdose-related sleepiness is marked by an inability to wake, slowed or irregular breathing, bluish lips or skin, gurgling sounds, vomiting, or seizures. In these moments, hesitation can be deadly.

"If you think someone is experiencing an overdose, no matter the substance involved, do not hesitate to call for medical help," the blog urges. It also reminds readers that Texas's Good Samaritan Law protects those who seek emergency care during an overdose situation.

Beyond awareness, the blog emphasizes preparation. Knowing whether drowsiness is an intended effect or a possible side effect changes decision-making. "Being aware of the potential for side effects helps you be more conscious of them and be able to react accordingly," the article explains. That awareness can prevent accidents, medical emergencies, and long-term harm.

For SARC, education is only part of the mission. Early intervention remains one of the most effective ways to reduce overdose risk and long-term damage. Addressing substance use when symptoms first appear keeps treatment options broader and outcomes stronger.

San Antonio Recovery Center provides a full continuum of care, including detox, residential treatment, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient services, and long-term alumni support. With one of the largest alumni networks in the city, support continues well beyond discharge.

San Antonio Recovery Center serves the greater San Antonio area with evidence-based treatment for substance use and co-occurring mental health conditions, including complex and medically involved cases.

For information about treatment options, call 866-957-7885.

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San Antonio Recovery Center - Culebra

San Antonio Recovery Center is based strongly on the 12-step treatment philosophy that has helped millions regain control of their lives. This successful San Antonio program emphasizes the recognition and identification of addictive behavior patterns.

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