[9. What are the effects of drugs like Xanax® and Percocet®?](https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/education/conversation-starters/10-questions-teens-ask-about-drugs-and-health)

Xanax® and Percocet® are both brand names of prescription drugs. Both can help treat certain medical conditions when used as directed by a doctor, but they have the potential to be misused. They work in the brain in different ways:

Xanax®, or alprazolam, is a [prescription depressant](https://nida.nih.gov/drug-topics/prescription-medicines) that helps produce a calming effect. Many people experience anxiety disorders and have difficulty sleeping, and prescription depressants can help treat these symptoms.

Percocet® is prescribed to treat severe pain from serious injuries or after surgery. It contains the analgesics (pain relievers) acetaminophen (the same drug as in Tylenol®) and oxycodone, which is an opioid analgesic. Opioids affect the brain's reward circuit, causing euphoria (the high), and flooding the brain with the chemical messenger (dopamine) which reinforces the brain to seek out the drug again.

Xanax® and Percocet® can cause severe adverse health effects, including overdose, if taken in large quantities or if taken with certain other drugs. Large doses of acetaminophen in Percocet® can also cause life-threatening liver damage. If you are prescribed these drugs, carefully follow your clinician’s instructions, and do not share them with others.