

# LORTAB ADDICTION, ABUSE, AND SYMPTOMS

*Written by Moira K. McGhee*

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Lortab is a brand name pain medication that includes hydrocodone, a semi-synthetic opioid, and acetaminophen, a less potent pain reliever that enhances hydrocodone’s pain-relieving effects. Hydrocodone is the most frequently prescribed opioid pain reliever in the United States, with 93.7 million dispensed in 2016 and 83.6 million dispensed in 2017. In 2018, an estimated 5.5 million people ages 12 and over misused hydrocodone products, making it the most commonly misused prescription pain reliever.

Lortab is prescribed to relieve moderate to severe pain. Some people may also use Lortab to relieve coughing due to the antitussive (cough suppressant) effects of hydrocodone. Besides helping to manage pain, Lortab also provides a euphoric feeling, which leads some people to abuse the drug by taking more than prescribed, or in a way not intended, to experience a high.

Opioids have a high potential for addiction, so abusing Lortab can lead to tolerance, dependence, and addiction. This is especially true when used long term. Once your body develops a tolerance to the prescribed amount, you may take increasingly higher doses to achieve the same effects. Abusing hydrocodone can cause respiratory distress, and the increased amount of acetaminophen can damage your liver.

## I. The Basics

Rehab in Dallas

Rehab in El Paso

Rehab in Fort Worth

Rehab in Galveston

This guide explains the effects, trends, and dangers of Lortab use. [Debab in Houston](#) provided analysis of the medicinal and behavioral treatment methods for Lortab addiction based on current research and publicly available statistics. In some cases, usage statistics are derived from general hydrocodone/acetaminophen prescription pain reliever use or opioid-based prescription pain reliever use.

## Primary Lortab Dangers

- **Addictiveness:** In a 2007 study by [Nutt et al.](#), 20 substances were evaluated based on their addictive potential in regards to physical dependence, psychological dependence, and pleasure. The [illicit opioid heroin](#) was included, and it ranked the highest of all substances, with a score of 3 out of 3 in each category.
- **Risk of overdose:** Both the hydrocodone and acetaminophen in Lortab have their own risk of causing an [overdose, with symptoms](#) dependent upon which ingredient is primarily causing the overdose. A hydrocodone overdose may cause a severe drop in respiration, sleepiness progressing to coma, muscle weakness, slowed heart rate, low blood pressure, cardiac arrest, and death. An acetaminophen overdose may cause fatal necrosis of the liver and renal tubules of the kidneys, low blood platelet count, coma, and death.
- **Unintended side effects:** Some of the most frequently reported side effects of Lortab are lightheadedness, dizziness, drowsiness, nausea, and vomiting. Other adverse reactions may include impaired mental and physical performance, anxiety, mood changes, constipation, and physical dependence.
- **Legal risks:** Although Lortab is legally available by prescription, its high potential for abuse and physical and psychological dependence places it on the [Schedule II controlled substance](#) list. This scheduling makes it illegal to possess Lortab without a prescription. A first offense could carry a legal penalty of not less than \$1,000 in fines and up to one year in prison. Subsequent offenses carry stiffer penalties.

## Lortab Background Information

Derived From	Semi-synthetic opioid hydrocodone and acetaminophen
Ways Used	Intended for oral use in pill form, but crushed and snorted or mixed with water and injected when abused
Scientific Name	Lortab
Slang/Street Names for Lortab	Lorries
How Long in Bodily System	The half-life of the hydrocodone in Lortab is generally about <a href="#">3.8 hours</a> , and the drug is usually eliminated completely within a day. However, it can still show up in urine tests up to four days after your last dose.

**Punitive Legal Measures:** **Using/Possession** Lortab is a [Schedule II controlled substance](#), so it's illegal to possess it without a valid prescription. A first offense is usually a misdemeanor that could carry a legal penalty of not less than \$1,000 in fines and up to a year in prison. Subsequent offenses have stiffer penalties.

**Punitive Legal Measures:** **Selling/Distributing** A conviction of selling/distributing Lortab could carry a fine of \$1 million to \$5 million and up to 20 years in prison. Penalties vary depending on how much you have in your possession. Subsequent offenses have stiffer penalties, and all penalties double if selling takes place near any school or certain youth-based recreational facilities.

**DEA Drug Rating** [Schedule II](#)

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## II. Signs of Abuse

### Behavioral Symptoms of Lortab Usage and Abuse

#### How Lortab affects the brain

The hydrocodone in Lortab works by blocking pain signals in the brain, changing your [perception of pain](#) and your emotional reaction to it. Hydrocodone also [stimulates brain cells](#) in the reward center to produce feelings of pleasure and well-being. The combination of pain relief and euphoria often becomes something users want to repeat, causing them to continue taking it even when they no longer need it.

Chronic use of Lortab can also cause changes in the brain that result in the underlying cause of dependence. When you become dependent on the drug, you develop an uncontrollable need to continue taking it, despite adverse effects on your body and relationships. Dependence may lead to an addiction that includes intense cravings, compulsive use, and withdrawal symptoms if intake stops abruptly.

#### Behavioral signs of Lortab usage and abuse

Once you use Lortab for an extended time period, your body builds up a tolerance, which requires higher and/or more frequent doses to achieve the same effects. However, because the opioid in Lortab is highly addictive, you may become addicted even when taking the drug exactly [as prescribed](#). Approximately [1.7 million people](#) age 12 and older had a pain reliever use disorder, according to the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

Lortab abuse can lead to numerous behavioral changes that users may not even be aware of, but individuals close to them may notice. Loved ones might notice changes in a user's personality, including mood swings, irritability, depression, and anxiety. They may also notice an increase in impaired judgment leading to risky behaviors and withdrawal from activities the user previously enjoyed.

Individuals struggling with Lortab addiction may also experience an uncontrollable urge to obtain and use more of the substance by visiting multiple doctors, forging prescriptions, and even stealing the drug from friends and family members who possess a valid prescription for it. The need to obtain and use the drug may take precedence over everything else, causing the users to shift their priorities and placing a strain on relationships with their loved ones.

## Physical Symptoms of Lortab Abuse

### How Lortab affects the body

When products containing hydrocodone are used for a long time, it can be habit-forming, which can cause [mental and/or physical dependence](#). Some of the physical symptoms of Lortab abuse include dizziness, extreme weakness, clammy skin, muscle twitching, decreased urination, stomach pain, bruising, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes).

### Early physical effects of Lortab

Physically, the early effects of Lortab include a reduced awareness of pain and a general feeling of well-being or euphoria, especially when taken in higher doses. Short-term physical effects can also include drowsiness, reduced worry and stress, numbness, and a feeling of drunkenness. The carefree, pleasant feelings it produces may encourage users to take increasing amounts as the body becomes tolerant and larger doses are required to experience a high.

This table illustrates the possible short-term physical effects associated with Lortab.

	Short-Term Physical Symptoms
<b>Initial</b> (direct effects of drug, 30 – 60 min.)	Pain relief Euphoria Relaxation
<b>Lingering</b> (within an hour of taking the drug)	Dizziness Drowsiness Confusion

Nausea  
Vomiting  
Muscle weakness  
Cold, clammy skin  
Slowed heart rate

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**Post-Use** (several hours to days after use)


Constipation  
Headache  
Anxiety  
Memory problems  
Mood changes  
Insomnia  
Drug cravings  
Dependence (more likely in with prolonged use)

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### Severe and long-term physical effects of Lortab

The longer you use Lortab, the more your body develops a tolerance to the drug. This tolerance may cause you to take increasing amounts of the drug to continue achieving the desired pain relief and euphoria. This is how physical dependence begins, often followed by physical addiction, which is your body's normal [response to long-term use](#).

Physical addiction is one of the most dangerous long-term physical effects of Lortab and usually causes you to experience withdrawal symptoms if you cut back or abruptly stop taking the drug. Although withdrawal symptoms aren't usually life-threatening, they can be extremely unpleasant, and to avoid them, individuals often go back to using Lortab.

Besides these issues, one of the severe physical effects of long-term Lortab use may include liver damage from the increased levels of acetaminophen. Hydrocodone abuse has also been found in isolated incidents to cause rapidly progressive [hearing loss](#) , which may require a cochlear implant. Combining Lortab with other substances, especially alcohol, may result in life-threatening respiratory problems and even death.

This table illustrates the possible long-term physical effects associated with Lortab.

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#### Long-Term Physical Symptoms

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<b>Casual</b>	Anxiety Constipation Dizziness Drowsiness Lightheadedness Nausea and/or vomiting
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## Chronic

***Including all the above effects for casual use***

Confusion  
Decreased respiration  
Fainting  
Itchy skin  
Lethargy  
Liver damage  
Hearing loss (potential)

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## Withdrawal

Anxiety  
Chills  
Depression  
Diarrhea  
Fever  
Insomnia  
Irritability  
Mood changes  
Joint and muscle pains  
Muscle tremors  
Nausea and/or vomiting  
Profuse sweating  
Stomach cramps  
Suicidal thoughts

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## Further Resources

Both the [National Institute of Drug Abuse](#) (NIDA) and the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA) offer in-depth information on the symptoms and treatment of prescription opioids like Lortab.

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# III. Lortab Usage

## Global prescription opioid usage remains steady worldwide with prevalence in North America

Globally, an estimated [53 million people](#) used opioids at least once during 2017, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2019 World Drug Report. This estimate represented 1.1% of the global population ages 15 to 64, and half of whom were also past-year users of opiates, which include heroin and opium. The highest prevalence of non-medical opioid use was estimated in North America, with nearly 4% of the population using opioids. This represented about a quarter of opioid users worldwide. Non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids, including hydrocodone substances, remained a primary concern in the United States.

In other regions, opioid use in Australia and New Zealand also remained much higher than the global average, with 3.3% of the adult population using opioids. Like North America, non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids was also the main concern in these countries. Opioid use was also high in Asia, with nearly 1% of the population using in the past year. Due to Asia's large population, this percentage translated to 29 million people.

### Prescription Opioid Use Throughout the World

	Highest	Second	Third
Regions with the Highest Number of Prescription Opioid Users	North America (including Mexico)	Australia and New Zealand	Asia and Oceania
Regions with the Highest Number of Opiate (Heroin and Opium) Users	Near and Middle East/South-West Asia	South Asia	Central Asia and Transcaucasia
Countries with the Largest Availability of Pharmaceutical Opioids for Medical Use (daily dose per million people), Average over 2015-2017	North America (30,814)	Oceania (12,563)	Europe (8,812)

*\*This table includes data from users of pharmaceutical opioids, including substances that include oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, and tramadol, and data from users of heroin and opium.*

Sources: [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – 2019 World Drug Report, Booklet 3](#)

## Lortab Usage Demographics in the United States

### Prescription opioid misuse remains high in the United States among all age groups

According to a [2018 SAMHSA survey](#), approximately 9.9 million people aged 12 or over misused prescription pain relievers over the past year, which represented 3.6% of the population. While this percentage was lower than the

percentages from 2015 to 2017, misuse of prescription opioids remains a serious public health problem in the United States. The problem is prevalent in all age groups, but it's highest among young adults between the ages of 18 and 25.

Among adolescents ages 12 to 17, about 695,000 adolescents misused prescription pain relievers, corresponding to 2.8% of this age group. About 1.9 million young adults, ages 18 to 25, misused prescription pain relievers, representing 5.5% of this age bracket. Adults aged 26 and older included an estimated 7.4 million pain reliever misusers, representing 3.4% of this age group. Including all age groups, these numbers were further broken down into subtypes of prescription pain relievers. The most commonly misused subtype was hydrocodone products, including Lortab, with an estimated 5.5 million people ages 12 and over, or 2% of the population, misusing these products over the past year.

### Demographics of Prescription Usage

	Past Year (2018)	Lifetime
8th grade (14-15 yo)	.6%	N/A
10th grade (15-16 yo)	1.1%	N/A
12th grade (17-18 yo)	1.7%	N/A

*\*This table includes data from users of Vicodin, another brand name prescription pain reliever like Lortab that's made from a combination of hydrocodone and acetaminophen. Lifetime data wasn't available.*

Source: [NIDA 2015-2018 Monitoring the Future Study: Trends in Prevalence of Various Drugs](#) ✓

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## IV. How to Find Help

Despite negative impacts on their health, personality, and relationships, many Lortab users continue abusing the drug. Once you've built a tolerance to the drug and begin taking increasingly higher doses, dependence is almost inevitable. Due to the highly addictive nature of opioid-based medications, it's also possible to become physically and psychologically addicted to the drug even when taking it as prescribed.

Withdrawal symptoms can be severely uncomfortable, which often makes it difficult to quit and avoid relapse. Medical professionals often suggest tapering off the drug to keep withdrawal symptoms at a minimum. Tapering is a multistep process that can take weeks or even months, depending on how long you've been using the drug. To learn more about this process, read the [Lortab rehabilitation guide](#), which provides a comprehensive resource for starting the detoxification and rehabilitation process.

## Staging an Intervention

If you have a loved one who's struggling with addiction, staging an intervention is often the first necessary step towards sobriety, but it's important to be strategic and loving in your approach. Even the most well-meaning of interventions can have a negative effect if they aren't handled correctly.

## 5 Tips for Staging an Intervention

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**1. Don't Do It Alone.** A professional interventionist is always the most qualified to guide a successful intervention. Also, rely on non-addict family and friends – especially those who have a close relationship with you or the addict.

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**2. Research Ahead of Time.** It's best to do plenty of research ahead of time to gather insight on the addiction and how it affects the addict. Also, be prepared with local resources for getting help.

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**3. Write Out Your Statement.** During the actual intervention, emotions will likely be running high, so it's best to have a statement of how the person's addiction has impacted you and your relationship with him or her. These statements should be honest, yet written from a place of love – no personal attacks.

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**4. Offer Help.** It's important for everyone attending the intervention to offer tangible help and support as the person works through detox and rehabilitation.

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**5. Set Boundaries.** If the person refuses to seek help and take the next steps outlined, it's important that they understand that everyone present will end codependence and enabling behaviors.

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