



The Parent Connection

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The National Drug-Free Workplace Alliance
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Prescription and Over-the Counter Drug Abuse Affects Everyone

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Drug Free America Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization committed to developing, promoting and sustaining global strategies, policies and laws that will reduce illegal drug use, drug addiction, drug-related injury and death.



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Nearly one in five teens has used prescription medications to get high, and two in five believe prescription medication is safer than illicit drugs. In Pinellas County, Florida, medical examiner toxicology reports found that prescription drug overdose deaths involving oxycodone rose from 61 in 2001 to 308 in 2008. Cities nationwide are also experiencing similar dramatic increases.

Prescription drugs are becoming more widely abused because of their easy accessibility. 20 percent of teens say they could get prescription drugs within an hour; one third say they could be obtained within a day's time. In an effort to combat this growing problem, we need to take a comprehensive approach. Kids need more education about the consequences of prescription drug abuse. Parents need to be vigilant about medications around the house, dispose of old prescriptions and lock up current medications. Doctors should also be held more accountable about what and how much they are prescribing (state mandated prescription monitoring programs have been successful against this type of abuse).

Awareness and action about prescription drug abuse must be emphasized at home, at school, in the community and in our laws.

Prescription Drugs - Questions and Answers

Primarily due to easy accessibility, prescription drug use/abuse is one of the fastest growing trends in the United States. If you have a cough, a headache, a fever, a stomach ache, if you can't go to sleep, if you sleep too much, what do you do? Take a pill. At least that is what many of us have been taught to do by our parents or recommended to do by our doctors. Pills help people feel better, and they are particularly more potent and more effective when prescribed by a doctor. Isn't this what most people think? The problem is that some pills are very addictive, and if an extra pill is taken more often than recommended or given to a friend, then it is considered abuse. As innocent as what is being described sounds, it is extremely dangerous. We believe education is the best way to promote awareness about this growing epidemic.

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Rx Drug Abuse—Continued from Page One

What is considered prescription drug abuse?

- Prescription drug abuse includes any non-medical use of a prescription medication or not using drugs exactly as prescribed for the patient.
- Taking medication without a prescription because the drugs were obtained illegally or using a friend's or family member's prescription is considered abuse.
- Overdosing or abusing a legally prescribed drug also qualifies.

What are some examples of the more frequently abused prescription drugs?

Opiates / pain relievers

OxyContin, Vicodin, Tylox, Percodan, Percocet, Lortab, Lorcet

Tranquilizers

Valium, Xanax

Stimulants

Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin

Sleep Medications

Zoloft, Ambien

Muscle Relaxers

Soma, Flexerall

Why are these drugs abused?

- Some people try to control their weight by using appetite suppressants, diuretics and stimulants. Used under a physician's care, these medicines may be used safely, but some resort to self-medication which can lead to abuse.
- Dealing with chronic pain or anxiety can be debilitating, especially when combined with other conditions such as depression and/or a physical or mental disability. Many people turn to self-medication for relief.

- Some legitimate prescription users develop an addiction to their medication which can lead to abuse or even to illegal drug use.
- In our competitive society some students and business people are using prescription stimulants in the false assumption that they improve focus or endurance. Other drugs are abused for a perceived advantage in physical performance or to stay awake.

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Good News - Parents are a Crucial Part of the Solution

- Children who learn a lot about the risk of drugs from their parents are up to half as likely to use (*Partnership Attitude Tracking Study*)
- Teens are influenced more by their parents or grandparents than any other factors (*According to a Newsweek Poll*)
- Teens' heroes are more likely to be a relative or friend than athletes or other recognizable figures (*According to a USA Today Poll*)

Parent Tip # 10

Spend time together as a family regularly and be involved in your kids' lives. Create a bond with your child. This builds up credit with your child so that when you have to set limits or enforce consequences, it's less stressful.

Did You Know...

"If I knew what I know now I would never have smoked marijuana even once! Take time to explain everything to your kids before they are misinformed by a kid who is already using or trying to sell it to them."

— Anthony, 20-years-old

Rx Drug Abuse—Continued from Page Two

What about prescription drugs bought via the Internet?

- What's great about drug information on the Internet is the same as what's awful about drug information on the Internet – there's so much of it. You can discover your options for legitimate prescription drug therapy online, and you can find out exactly how much Tylenol PM to mix with heroin for the best high.
- The web has brought with it easy availability of prescription drugs, too, and these pharmacies often do not require patients to be examined in person. Dangerously potent medicines can be bought by anyone with a search engine and a credit card number.
- Not all online pharmacies are legitimate – how do you know that the medication contains the right amount of an active ingredient?
- The location for these pharmacies can be easily falsified. Suppliers may say that a medication comes from a country with strict regulations on drug manufacturing, but buyers can't know for sure that their medicines are produced according to government guidelines with only a website's word for it.

Are there any over-the-counter medicines being abused?

- The most common one is cough medicine with dextromethorphan (DXM) abused for its almost hallucinogenic effects.
- Some over-the-counter drugs like pseudoephedrine are mixed with other products such as nail polish removers and used to make illegal drugs like methamphetamine and GHB.

- Over-the-counter drugs can cause adverse reactions due to medical conditions or other medications the user has already taken. Just because they are legally available without a prescription doesn't mean they are safe, especially when not used according to directions.

Aren't these drugs legal to use and safe because they are regulated?

- Yes, they're legal and generally safe for patients for whom the drugs are prescribed if they're used in the way their doctors prescribe them.
- No, they're illegal and unsafe if they are abused by patients or used by someone for whom they were not prescribed.
- Something that makes these drugs even more dangerous is the fact that they're available everywhere – your kitchen counter, your daughter's best friend's backpack, your aging parents' medicine cabinet. They are easier to get but just as dangerous as illegal drugs.

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What can parents do?

- Be realistic about your teen's vulnerability to Rx/OTC abuse
- Understand that abusing medicines is just as dangerous as abusing street drugs
- Be alert to any changes you observe in your child as possible warning signs
- Safeguard your own medicines and ask your friends and relatives to do the same
- Be aware of your own personal use and/or abuse of Rx and over the counter drugs

Rx Drug Abuse—Continued from Page Three

Remember:

- Have your child speak to you before using any medicine.
- Read the Drug Facts panel on the label (all of it), follow the directions, and speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have any questions.
- Check the ingredients to see if you are using two medicines with the same ingredient and remember to choose a medicine that treats only the problem you have.
- Report if you do not feel better or start to feel worse after taking a medicine.
- Always keep track of all the medicines you are taking and keep them in the bottle, box or tube they came in.
- Keep medications in a safe, dry place, out of reach of children and pets.

What should parents not do?

- Don't use medicine unless you know what it is and what it is for
- Don't use more medicine than the amount listed on the label
- Don't use other people's prescription medicine
- Don't share your medicine with someone else
- Don't take the medicine for longer than the label says
- Don't use expired medicines
- Don't crush or break pills
- Don't dispose of medicines in the trash or flush them

How to Properly Dispose of Medicines

Maybe it's been a few months since your surgery, or your doctor prescribed you a new medication leaving an unused portion of your old prescription. Perhaps an over-the-counter medicine has now expired. You know you need to get rid of it. So what is the best way to dispose of these medicines?

Here is the advice from the experts:

1. Do NOT flush medications down the toilet! Wastewater treatment facilities are not designed to treat flushed medications that can interfere with plant operations. Another hazard is that medications can pass through the treatment facility and harm plants or fish downstream.
2. Contact your local police or sheriff's department narcotics division for information on disposal of unwanted medications.
3. Contact your physician or pharmacy to see if they have a take-back program.
4. Dispose of medications following these safety tips to reduce the risk that loose medication could fall onto the street or into a storm sewer where an animal or child could eat it.
 - a) Packaging – Keep the medication in the original container to help identify the contents if they are accidentally ingested.
 - b) Privacy – Mark out the patient's name and prescription number.
 - c) Treating – "Treat" pills by adding water or soda to dissolve them. For liquids, add something inedible such as cat litter, dirt, or cayenne pepper.
 - d) Sealing – Close the lid and secure with duct or packing tape. Place the bottle(s) inside an opaque (non see-through) container such as a coffee can or plastic laundry bottle. Tape that container closed.
 - e) Hiding – Hide the container in the trash. Do not place in a recycle bin.

MedSafe™



Designed for safe and convenient storage of all types of medications, MedSafe is a first-of-its-kind electronic lock-box that installs easily into most existing home medicine cabinets.

MedSafe provides parents with a common sense solution for keeping their children out of harm's way.



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FACTS

Rx drug deaths far outnumber gun deaths
100,000-30,000 per year.

Teens now abuse Rx drugs more than almost all illegal drugs combined.

39% of people look in their host's medicine cabinet.

The majority of kids abusing Rx drugs obtain the drugs from their home, or the homes of family and friends.

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