

Practical advice for parents

As a parent, teach your teen to:

- **Respect** the power of medicine and use it properly.
- **Recognize** that all medicines, including prescription medications, have **risks** along with benefits. The risks tend to increase dramatically when medicines are abused.
- Take **responsibility** for learning how to take prescription medicines safely and appropriately, and seek help at the first sign of a problem – their own or a friend's abuse.

Here are some ways you can help:

- Speak to your teen about prescription medicines – do not presume that illegal drugs are the only threat.
- Encourage your teen to ask you or a doctor about the negative side effects of a prescribed medicine, how to watch for them, and what to do if a negative effect is suspected.
- Alert your family physician that you are concerned and ask him or her to speak to your teen about the importance of proper use of prescription medicines.
- Avoid stockpiling prescription medicines and keep them in a safe place.
- Promptly and properly dispose of any unused prescription medicines.
- Provide a safe and open environment for your teen to talk about abuse issues.
- Monitor your teen's use of the Internet, especially for any unapproved online purchases.

Please remember that prescription medicines, when used correctly and under a doctor's supervision, are safe and effective.

Resources

National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE)

NCPIE is a multi-disciplinary coalition of over 100 organizations working to stimulate and improve communication of information on appropriate medicine use to consumers and health care professionals.
301-656-8565
www.talkaboutrx.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Information for Parents and Teachers

This site contains materials that are developed specifically with parents in mind.
www.nida.nih.gov/parent-teacher.html

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)

CSAT promotes the availability and quality of community-based substance abuse treatment services for individuals and families who need them. It supports policies and programs to broaden the range of evidence-based effective treatment services for people who abuse alcohol and drugs and that also address other addiction-related health and human services problems.
240-276-2750
www.csat.samhsa.gov

To order SAMHSA publications, call SAMHSA's Health Information Network (SHIN) at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 or visit <http://incadi.samhsa.gov>

SAMHSA's National Helpline

The National Helpline is a national, toll-free referral service for locating drug and alcohol abuse treatment programs. For information or treatment referral, call:
800-662-HELP (800-662-4357) (Toll-Free) (English and Spanish)
800-487-4889 (TDD) (Toll-Free)
Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator:
www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA's Family Guide

The Family Guide is a public education Web site that serves as a family guide to keep youth mentally healthy and drug free.
240-276-2548
www.family.samhsa.gov

This brochure was prepared under contract number 270-03-9001 through the Office of Consumer Affairs in the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, opinions, and content of this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of CSAT, SAMHSA, or HHS.

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS

about prescription drug abuse

Not Worth The Risk
X even if it's legal

EDUCATE before YOU MEDICATE

The NCPIE Coalition—working together to promote safe medicine use

What do parents need to know?

As a parent of a teenager, you may have spoken to your child about illegal drugs and their harmful effects. But did you know that legally prescribed medicines are also a cause of concern?

Today more than before, an alarming number of teenagers are more likely to have abused prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs than illegal drugs like ecstasy, cocaine, crack, and methamphetamines.

The hidden dangers of prescription medicine abuse include dependence, slower brain activity, irregular heartbeats, dangerously high body temperature, heart failure, or lethal seizures. Prescription drug abuse increases emergency room visits and suicide attempts, with nearly 500,000 emergency room visits for abuse of prescription or OTC drugs in 2004.

The easiest way for teens to obtain prescription medicines is from their friends or their parents' medicine cabinet. It's so common that it could happen even in your house!

- Nearly one in five teens (19 percent, or 4.5 million people) report abusing prescription medications to get high.
- Two in five teens (40 percent, or 9.4 million people) believe that prescription medicines, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor, are "much safer" to use than illegal drugs.
- Teens are misusing everything from pain relievers like OxyContin® and Vicodin® to stimulants, sedatives, and tranquilizers like Valium®.

Believe it or not, **parents can make a difference.** Kids who continue to learn about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs than those who are not taught about the dangers. **But it's up to you to talk about it openly with your kids.** Only a third of parents report discussing the risks of abusing prescription medicines with their kids. **It's time to change that!**

Understanding "Generation Rx"

Did you know that teens as young as 12, as well as college students between ages 18 and 25, have among the highest rates of prescription drug abuse? This is why it is important for you, as a parent, to address this with your child at an early age.

So what causes today's teens to abuse prescription drugs to get high? Among the factors are a series of misconceptions, lack of information, and a care-free attitude toward the risks involved in using prescription medicines improperly.

Why do kids abuse prescription drugs?

- They are seeking psychological or physical pleasure.
- They want to fit in with groups of friends and are in search of acceptance and bonding.
- They do not realize the risks of taking medicines that have not been prescribed specifically for them or the danger of not following a prescription's directions.
- It is easier to get prescription drugs than illegal drugs.

Believe it or not, teens believe in the following misconceptions:

- Prescription medicines, even if not prescribed by a doctor, are much safer to use than illegal drugs.
- Prescription pain relievers cannot be addictive.
- Once in a while, there is nothing wrong with using prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription.

As a parent, this is where you come in. You need to explain to your teen the dangers of prescription drug abuse.

Recognize the signs of prescription drug abuse

As a parent, the best way to prevent prescription drug abuse is to first educate yourself. That way, you can accurately and adequately present the facts when you talk with your teen.

Be sure you can recognize the signs of prescription drug abuse. Some of the warning signs are:

- Fatigue, red or glazed eyes, and repeated health complaints.
- Sudden mood changes, including irritability, negative attitude, personality changes, and general lack of interest in hobbies/activities.
- Secretiveness and withdrawing from family.
- Decreased or obsessive interest in school work.
- Missing prescription medicines from your medicine cabinet. Check frequently!
- Additional filled prescriptions on your pharmacy record that you did not fill.

Some of these warning signs might signal other problems as well. If you recognize any of these signs, contact the resources provided in this brochure, or your teen's physician or other health care professional.