



Taking ACTION to prevent & address PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE



EDUCATE *before*
YOU MEDICATE

The NCPIE
 Coalition-working
 together to promote
 safe medicine use

National Council on Patient Information and Education
www.talkaboutrx.org



A Resource Kit for America's College Campuses

Introduction /How to Use

WELCOME TO THE COLLEGE RESOURCE KIT

All of the items listed in the “What’s Included?” section (pages 3-4), can be downloaded directly from www.talkaboutrx.org.

College. It’s often said to be the best years of your life. But college can be stressful.

For many students, it’s the very first time they are away from home. While this new found independence can be liberating, it can also feel overwhelming. Adjusting to a new environment, communal living situations and juggling academic and social pressures isn’t easy. Students often find themselves up against tough decisions—one of which is standing up to pressures to do drugs and consume alcohol.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ON CAMPUS

While alcohol abuse and binge drinking still top the list of substance abuse issues on college campuses, **the non-medical use of prescription drugs—most notably stimulants, sedatives and pain relievers—is a serious and growing problem.** In fact, those of college-age have among the highest rates of prescription drug abuse. About one in four people aged 18 to 20 report using these medications non-medically at least once in their lives (NSDUH, 2008), and many more have been offered these medications by friends or fellow students. By sophomore year in college, about half of students’ classmates will have been offered the opportunity to abuse a prescription drug (Arria, 2008).

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The concern is that many students may not even realize that they, their roommate, teammate or friend are misusing or abusing these medications. **But doing so can jeopardize their future.**

At the same time, early detection efforts to identify students at high risk falls short—less than one third of schools report doing any type of screening for prescription drug problems (NCASA, 2007).

Student leaders now have a new resource to spread the word about the negative impact of prescription drug abuse on their peers’ health and safety.

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TAKE ACTION TODAY

Taking Action to Prevent and Address Prescription Drug Abuse: A Resource Kit for College Campuses is designed to help inform and mobilize college campuses to raise awareness about and address the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs.

The materials in the kit are designed to engage and equip peer educators and student leaders with timely and practical information, resources and student-driven programming ideas to educate their peers about prescription drug abuse prevention and treatment. Many of the activities use existing channels (for example, student health services, freshmen year experience) to help student leaders easily work in messages about the dangers of prescription drug abuse, especially when used along with other substances like alcohol.

WHY PEERS?

College students themselves can play a powerful role in elevating awareness and prompting behavior change around a particular health issue.

Studies that have shown peer education can help to:

- Reduce high-risk behaviors
- Support healthy attitudes and behaviors
- Tell it like it really is (While prescription drug misuse and abuse on college campuses needs to be addressed, not everyone is doing it.)
- Cut through clutter and competing health information (peers listen to peers)

Peer influencers might include: peer health educators, resident assistants or advisors, campus leaders in student government, the Greek system or special interest groups/campus clubs, and captains of athletic teams, among others.

“Whether you’re a resident assistant, peer health educator, campus leader in student government or involved in the Greek system, or captain of your athletic team, you can make a difference by helping to raise awareness about the dangers of prescription drug abuse and steps to take if treatment for abuse is needed.”

THE GOAL?

Not only to educate college students about the growing problem and danger of prescription drug abuse, warning signs to watch for and resources for treatment, but also to help build skills so that students can take action against it. Inside this kit, you’ll find many ideas and tools to help spread the word—downloadable handouts, how to start a Fan page on Facebook, a sample newspaper article and public service announcements, important messages to share when you are talking to friends and much more.

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“Whatever the reason, using medications nonmedically—even just once—is very dangerous, and might even be illegal.”

Keep in Mind

When taken as directed and by the person for whom they are prescribed, medications can help people with a host of medical conditions feel better.

But all medications have risks. Misusing or abusing your own or someone else's medication—even once—can be very dangerous.

Mixing prescription medications with alcohol or other drugs or crushing or snorting pills to enhance their effects—which some college students do—can lead to permanent organ damage, a stroke, heart attack, overdose and even death.

It's never a good idea to share your medications with friends or be in possession of someone else's prescription, regardless of the reasons. When it comes to controlled substances, it's illegal—yes, it's as bad as drug dealing.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

Inside the *Taking Action to Prevent and Address Prescription Drug Abuse* resource kit, you'll find helpful materials and ideas for building awareness and prompting action. These may be downloaded at www.talkaboutrx.org:

- ✓ **“Get the Facts: Prescription Drug Abuse on College Campuses”**—provides basic 101 on prescription drug misuse and abuse.
- ✓ **“5 Things You Can Do on Campus”**—gives students who might not have a lot of free time five simple things they can do to help address prescription drug misuse and abuse on campus (for example, talking about the dangers with friends or roommates, keeping their own medicines out of sight, etc.)
- ✓ **“What You Can Do: Tips for Raising Awareness about Prescription Drug Abuse on Campus”**—provides peer leaders with ideas and supplemental tools to make it easy to implement awareness and education activities on campus.
- ✓ **Key Messages to Educate and Promote Action**—key points that should be reinforced about prescription drug abuse on college campuses for inclusion in any campus communications about the issue.
- ✓ **Sample Newspaper/Online Article**
- ✓ **Sample Public Service Announcements**

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- ✓ **“Before We Go Any Farther: What You Need to Know about Prescription Drug Abuse”**—can be used by resident assistants, Greek advisors, student government leaders and other peer leaders to hand to students to educate them on the dangers of prescription drug misuse and abuse.
- ✓ **“Mind Your Meds: Basic Medication Safety Tips”**—educating your peers about the dangers of misusing or abusing prescription drugs is only one piece of the puzzle. The reality is many students probably take medications that are prescribed to them by their doctor at home or through campus health services. This handout gives tips on how to safeguard medications and prevent them from falling into the wrong hands.
- ✓ **Warning Signs & Symptoms of Prescription Drug Abuse**
- ✓ **Myth Busters: 6 Myths about Prescription Drug Abuse**
- ✓ **Letter to Parents**—can be customized by your school to inform parents about actions being taken to prevent prescription drug abuse on campus, things to watch for and how to protect their children’s health and reduce the risk of harm, and where to find information about treatment options.
- ✓ **Helpful Resources and Tools**—list of national organizations and federal agencies that offer information and resources on college student life and/or prescription drug abuse prevention and treatment.
- ✓ **Tips for Promoting Responsible Prescription Medicine Use Online**
- ✓ **How to Create a Facebook Page to Communicate with Students**
- ✓ **References**
- ✓ **You’re in Control—Using Prescription Medicine Responsibly brochure** (PDF coming soon), **poster** (PDF coming soon)
- ✓ **Project Advisory Team**

These materials were developed with the guidance and insight of an esteemed group of experts—the **Project Advisory Team** (PAT). This initiative is made possible by **SAMHSA** and additional grant funding from the **National Association of Chain Drug Stores Foundation**.

What’s the Difference? Prescription Drug Misuse vs. Abuse

It’s important to understand the difference from the outset. It all comes down to intention (FDA, 2010). Taking prescription drugs to feel good or get high is an example of drug abuse. Misusing a medication might include taking your own prescribed medication differently or at a higher dose than was advised by your health care professionals or self-medicating with someone else’s (for example, taking a friend’s Percocet to treat a headache, sharing a sleeping aid with a friend who needs a night of good sleep). Whatever the reason, using these medications nonmedically—even just once—is very dangerous, and might even be illegal.