



# 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](http://www.talkaboutrx.org)



## A Resource Kit for America's College Campuses

### Mind Your Meds: Basic Medication Safety Tips

While alcohol abuse and binge drinking still top the list of substance abuse issues on college campuses, the non-medical use of prescription drugs—and the tendency to combine these medications with alcohol and other drugs—is a growing concern.

Some college students abuse prescription medications to feel good or get high, but plenty of others turn to these medications to help reduce the stress and anxiety of college life, boost their mood, pull an all-nighter to cram for an exam or write that dreaded term paper they've put off or to increase their stamina when playing sports.

Most students who misuse or abuse these medications get them from a friend or relative. They think these drugs are safe because they are prescribed by doctors. **But taking someone else's prescription is dangerous.**

If your doctor has prescribed a medication to you—especially if it is a **stimulant** (Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin), **sedative** (Xanax and Valium) or **pain reliever** (Percocet, Vicodin, Oxycontin)—you need to take steps to safeguard these medications and prevent them from falling into the wrong hands. That's because they have the potential to lead to addiction, abuse and even death if used by someone other than you. It's also illegal to share these medications.

Even if you trust your friends and roommates, residence halls and sorority and fraternity houses are busy places and it's hard to keep track of who is coming and going.

“As tempting as it might be to share your medication with a friend or roommate either to fit in or because you feel empathy for them if they are in pain or desperately need to stay up all night to cram for an exam, **DON'T!**”

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### LEARN HOW TO SAFEGUARD YOUR MEDICATIONS. PLAY IT SAFE:

- ✓ **Store your medications in a secure and dry place.** People visiting you may be interested in stealing your prescriptions, especially if they are left visible (sitting on your desk or dresser, for example). Consider using a lock box or hide them in the back of your closet where it is not easy for others to find.
- ✓ **Keep track of your medicine.** Count how many pills you have at any given time to check for missing medicine.
- ✓ **Don't share your medications under any circumstances.** If a friend or teammate is injured, instead of "sharing" a pain reliever, make sure he or she sees a healthcare professional for care.
- ✓ **Keep a low profile.** Your medicines are your business. There's no reason to tell your friends about the medicines you take.
- ✓ **Properly dispose** of old or unused medicines. Most prescriptions drugs can be placed in a non-see-through container mixed with dirt or kitty litter and thrown in the garbage. Visit [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm) and **Smart Rx Disposal** at [www.smarxtdisposal.net](http://www.smarxtdisposal.net).

### RESIST THE PRESSURE TO SHARE YOUR MEDS

As tempting as it might be to share your medication with a friend or roommate either to fit in or because you feel empathy for them if they are in pain or desperately need to stay up all night to cram for an exam, **DON'T!**

- Peer pressure is real, but don't give in to the temptation to fit in. Your true friends will respect your decision to avoid abusing prescription drugs.
- If you're like MOST college students, you know it's not worth the risk to misuse or abuse prescription medications. Only one in four people aged 18 to 20 report using these medications non-medically at least once in their lives. But the issue is very real. By students' sophomore year in college, about half of their classmates will have been offered the opportunity to abuse a prescription drug.
- If you or a friend are feeling stressed about class deadlines, there are other solutions. Ask your resident assistant, a peer health educator and or other campus resource (for example, health services, learning support services that provide time, stress and study skill management, and college advisors) how you can better manage your time, or find ways to relax, such as exercising or spending time with friends.
- Look at the big picture—keep your goals and the "finish line" in mind when making decisions—on campus and off.

**YOU** are in control of **YOUR life** and **YOUR medications**. If you find yourself, or friends, in a situation of abusing prescription drugs, speak with an advisor, peer health

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When taken correctly, prescription and nonprescription (over-the-counter) medicines can go a long way to help relieve symptoms, fight certain infections and even improve the functioning and quality of life of those with common chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes or depression. But, when they are misused or taken without a prescription, the consequences can be devastating and even deadly. Prescription drugs are only safe to use at the dose they've been prescribed *for you* by a doctor who knows *your health history*.

educator, trusted teacher, or resident assistant on campus—they are there to help. You and your friends can take steps to avoid the dangers associated with the abuse of prescription drugs.

For more information about the dangers of misusing or abusing prescription drugs or to help raise awareness on your campus, visit [www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org).