

Most students use prescription drugs properly, but nearly one in five teens reports abusing them to get high. By their sophomore year in college, about half of all students have been offered the opportunity to abuse a prescription drug.

Consider these facts:

- Teens are engaging in dangerous activities, such as crushing pills, then snorting or injecting their contents. They also combine them with alcohol or illicit drugs. At “pharming parties,” they may dump a variety of drugs in a bowl and take them without knowing what they are.
- Teens most commonly abuse pain relievers (e.g., OxyContin® and Vicodin®), stimulants (e.g., Ritalin® and Adderall®), and sedatives and tranquilizers (e.g., Valium® and Xanax®).
- It is surprisingly easy for teens to gain access to prescription drugs from their families’ medicine cabinets, a friend’s purse, and even a schoolmate’s locker!
- Young people sometimes illegally order controlled prescription drugs from illegal Web sites.

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

Additional Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
SAMHSA’s Health Information Network (SHIN)
1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)
www.SAMHSA.gov/shin

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)
240-276-2750
www.csat.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA’s National Helpline
800-662-HELP (800-662-4357) (Toll-Free)
(English and Spanish)
800-487-4889 (TDD) (Toll-Free)
Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator:
240-276-2548
www.samhsa.gov/treatment

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
www.nida.nih.gov/parent-teacher.html

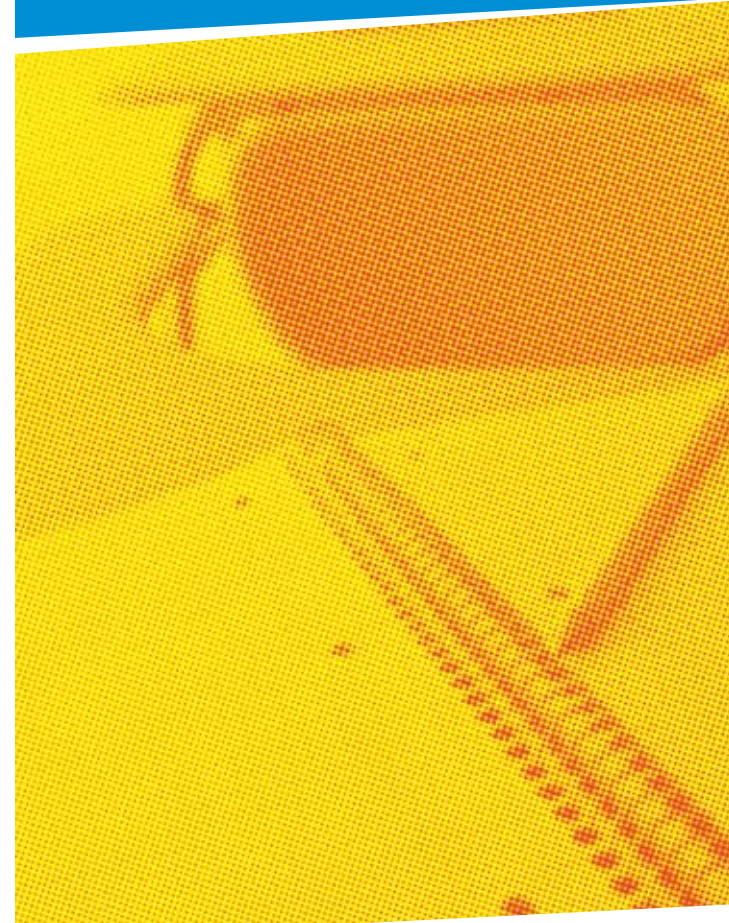
National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPPIE)
301-656-8565
www.talkaboutrx.org

Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)
www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com

National Association of School Nurses (NASN)
240-821-1130
www.nasn.org

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Not Worth The Risk
X even if it’s legal



What do
educators?
need to know

You care about your students, and you know them as well as anyone. But did you know that while rates of drug abuse are down overall, more and more teens are abusing prescription drugs today?

AN IMPORTANT **LESSON:**
helping students avoid prescription drug abuse

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Many teens—and adults, too—have carefree attitudes toward the use of prescription drugs. People ages 12 to 25 have among the highest rates of prescription drug abuse.

How can I understand “Generation Rx”?

People ages 12 to 25 have among the highest rates of prescription drug abuse. Parents and others often underestimate teens’ abuse of prescription drugs.

Teens may have carefree attitudes about prescription drug abuse and be unaware of the serious and potentially life-threatening risks.

Why do kids abuse prescription drugs?

- They are seeking psychological or physical pleasure.
- They do not understand the risks of taking drugs that were not prescribed specifically for them. They also fail to realize the danger of mixing prescription drugs with alcohol, other prescription drugs, and illegal drugs.
- It is easier to get prescription drugs than illegal drugs.
- There is pressure to get better grades or to fit in with friends. They also may not be aware of other, positive alternatives to help them deal with stress.

What do teens not always realize?

- Abusing prescription drugs, even if they are prescribed by a doctor, is *not* safer than abusing illegal drugs.
- Misusing prescription drugs *can* lead to addiction.
- Using prescription drugs without a doctor’s prescription or abusing someone else’s prescriptions—or your own—is *always* harmful, not to mention illegal.

How do I recognize the signs of prescription drug abuse?

- Decreased or obsessive interest in school work
- Fatigue, red or glazed eyes, and repeated health complaints
- Sudden mood changes, including irritability, negative attitude, personality changes, and general lack of interest in extracurricular activities
- An extreme change in groups of friends or hangout locations

What should I remind my students to do?

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

Help your students understand prescription drug abuse—whether you are a health teacher or simply work closely with students as an athletic coach, mentor, or guidance counselor. Take even just a moment to have a brief conversation in the hallways or locker room. Remind your students that you are there to help.

How can I help?

- ✓ **Speak to your students** about prescription drug abuse—do not presume that illegal drugs are the only threat.
- ✓ **Alert parents** if you are concerned about their child. Let parents know what they can do. A brochure for parents, “Talking to your kids about prescription drug abuse,” is available at www.talkaboutrx.org.
- ✓ **Provide a safe and open environment** for your students to talk about abuse issues. Empathize with the stresses of growing up and identify positive outlets that can help relieve teens’ stress, such as sports teams and youth groups.
- ✓ **Hold interactive discussions** with your students to dispel myths and give them the facts.
- ✓ **Encourage students to speak with you** or another faculty member if they suspect a friend may have a problem. A brochure for teens, “Prescription drugs: They can help but also hurt,” is available at www.talkaboutrx.org.
- ✓ **Be observant** about discussions students may have in the hallways about prescription drug abuse. If you hear misconceptions, join in to correct them and show your support.