

PARENT ALERT INFO



Nationwide, prescription (Rx) and over-the-counter (OTC) drug abuse by teens and young adults is a serious problem. It is reported that:

- 1 in 5 teens has abused a Rx pain medication
- 1 in 5 teens reported abusing Rx stimulants and tranquilizers
- 1 in 10 has abused cough medication
- Prescription drugs are the drug of choice among 12 to 13-year-olds.
- More than 4.5 million teens have abused prescription drugs.
- Every day, 2,500 youths (aged 12-17 years) abuse a prescription pain reliever for the very first time.
- Among teens who have abused painkillers, nearly one-fifth (18%) used them at least weekly in the past year.
- Six percent of 12th graders reported past year abuse of cough or cold medicines to get high.

WHY ARE TEENS ABUSING Rx AND OTC MEDICINES?

#1 TEENS THINK: MEDICINES ARE SAFE TO ABUSE BECAUSE THEY COME FROM A DOCTOR OR PHARMACY.

FACT: That is just plain wrong. Medicines are safe for the purpose for which they are intended. There IS no doctor monitoring Rx/OTC abuse...no warning about side effects or allergic reactions...nothing about the risk of taking one pill too many. Still, teen's perception is that it is "medicine" so it's safe.

#2 TEENS THINK: SHARING OTHERS PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE IS SAFE

FACT: People have different tolerance for Rx drugs. What is meant for a friend or grandparent does not make it safe for someone else. Health conditions, body weight, interaction with other medications, and allergies are some of the factors considered by physicians when prescribing medicines.

#3 TEENS THINK: IT IS SAFE TO ABUSE Rx DRUGS... IF YOU ONLY DO IT ONCE IN A WHILE.

FACT: Addiction can happen very rapidly, with only a few uses. Experts say addiction can begin after using a drug just once—there is no way to predict who this may happen to.

Many teens think these drugs are safe because they have undergone rigorous testing and approval process; they are legal to use, and are prescribed by a doctor. However, taking these drugs without a prescription to get high or "self-medicate" can be as dangerous – and addictive – as using illicit street drugs. The 14th annual Parents Attitude Tracking Survey issued May 4, 2009, documents an increase in parental awareness of risks associated with youth abuse of Rx drugs. The heightened awareness, however, has yet to result in increased parental action to prevent the behavior.

Please take the time after reviewing this D.A.R.E. PARENT ALERT to discuss with your child how your family wants to respond to this serious problem.

WHAT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY CAN DO:

- Have a family discussion regarding the abuse of Rx/OTC drugs.
- Establish family rules about abuse of all drugs, including Rx/OTC drugs.

- Here are simple rules for parents to make their homes safe.

SStore all medicines in a safe place – a MedSafe place.

Take inventory and lock up all medications (except for an emergency supply of life-saving medicine). Make note of the amount in each bottle.

Over 90% of prescription drugs abused by children are obtained from their home or the home of relatives or friends, it's essential to keep medications secure. Locking up medications in the home could immediately have a positive impact upon the problem. D.A.R.E. has joined forces with MedSafe to help parents. MedSafe manufactures the MedSafe digital lockbox, an innovative and unique device which installs easily into most existing medicine cabinets to store and secure Rx medications to protect our kids. MedSafe provides a simple, effective, user-friendly, and cost-efficient means to safeguard your medicines. The MedSafe is normally \$59.95, but is available for a limited time at \$39.95. Visit www.helpsaveourkids.com.

Awareness

Know what drugs are in your home and how dangerous they can be if abused.

Follow Directions

All medicines have labels and package inserts that describe how they should be used. If you have questions, call your doctor or pharmacist.

Educate

Teach young people the responsible way to use medicine and use every opportunity to talk to them about the dangers of misuse. Be a good role model yourself and use medicines correctly. Speak to family members and friends about the need to inventory and secure their drugs.

- Properly dispose of unused, unneeded and expired medications.

TALK, TALK, TALK with each other and stay informed.

KNOW THE SIGNS:

Signs of Rx/OTC drug abuse are many and will vary among individuals, but may include: change in habits and appearance, neglecting responsibilities, symptoms of intoxication, increased sensitivity, blackouts and forgetfulness, un-warranted sleep episodes, appetite and weight change, inability to sleep, irritability, defensiveness, dizziness, extreme anorexia, tremors, increased heart rate and presence of paraphernalia.

STREET TERMINOLOGY:

There are many street terms used for specific Rx/OTC drug abuse and related activity. Terms such as: pharming, skittles, bambos, candy, dolls, amped-out, and bolt - the list goes on. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy maintains a data base (www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov) of over 2,300 street names for drugs and drug abuse behavior.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit the following web sites:

www.dare.org

www.dea.gov

www.dfa.org

www.helpsaveourkids.com



www.theantidrug.com
www.nida.nih.gov