

Parents: Get Smart

About Teen Prescription (Rx) Drug Abuse.



Teen prescription drug abuse is when a young person takes a prescription medication that was prescribed for someone else, for a non-medical use.

Facts

- **1 in 4 teens** has taken a prescription drug that was not prescribed for them by a doctor.¹
- Every day, **2,500 teens** take a prescription pain reliever for a non-medical use for the first time.²
- More teens abuse prescription medications than illegal drugs, **except** marijuana.³

Serious Risks to Teens:

- Abusing prescription medications **is not safer** than taking illegal “street” drugs like cocaine or heroin.
- Teen prescription drug abuse can result in **addiction**, health issues, and **can be fatal**.
- Mixing prescription drugs with alcohol and illegal drugs is **particularly dangerous** and can be fatal.
- Teen prescription drug abuse can impact **a young person’s developing brain** and good judgment, their relationships with family and friends, and academic performance.

Your Home: Safe Zone or Danger Zone?

Teens often get their hands on prescription drugs right in their own homes — from a parent or relative’s medicine cabinet, drawer or kitchen cupboard.

- 64 percent of teens (age 12-17) that have abused prescription pain relievers say they got them from friends or relatives.⁴

For more information about prescription drug abuse, visit SmartMovesSmartChoices.org

Medications Most Commonly Abused

- **Opioids** — commonly known as prescription painkillers.
- **Sedatives** — such as anti-anxiety and sleep disorder medications.
- **Stimulants** — such as medication to treat Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Take Action Now

1. Create a Safe Environment

- Know what’s in your medicine cabinet
- Properly dispose of unused or expired medications
- Secure all prescription medications in a safe place
- Educate family and friends (especially grandparents)

2. Notice Common Signs of Abuse

- Physical and psychological changes
- Changes in academic performance
- Pills missing from the medicine cabinet

3. Talk to Your Teens

- Be open and non-judgmental
- Communicate regularly
- Talk about dangers of prescription drug abuse

Research shows that teens who learn about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 50 percent less likely to try drugs.⁵

1. The Partnership at DrugFree.org and MetLife Foundation. (2011). *2010 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS) Key Findings*, 2.
 2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Office of Applied Studies. (2007). *A Day in the Life of American Adolescents: Substance Use Facts. The OAS Report*, 2.
 3. White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. (2008). *Prescription for Danger: A Report on the Troubling Trend of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drug Abuse Among the Nation’s Teens*, 1.
 4. White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. (2008). *Prescription for Danger: A Report on the Troubling Trend of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drug Abuse Among the Nation’s Teens*, 4.
 5. The Partnership at DrugFree.org and MetLife Foundation. (2009). *2008 Parents Attitude Tracking Study (PATS)*, 11.