

# 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.<sup>1</sup>
- Every day, **2,500 teens** take a prescription pain reliever for a non-medical use for the first time.<sup>2</sup>
- More teens abuse prescription medications than illegal drugs, **except** marijuana.<sup>3</sup>

### 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.<sup>4</sup>

For more information about prescription drug abuse, visit [SmartMovesSmartChoices.org](http://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.**<sup>5</sup>

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.