

Facts from

www.dea.gov/pr/multimedia-library/publications/DEA_Prescription-For-Disaster_508ver.pdf

Prescription drugs are the most commonly abused substances by teens after marijuana and alcohol. When teens abuse prescription drugs and take them in different amounts or for other reasons than as they are prescribed, they affect the brain and body in ways very similar to illicit drugs.

Some teens use Adderall® or Ritalin® to try and boost their test performance to improve their grades. Studies show that these stimulants do not help learning when used by persons who do not have ADHD.

Where do teens get their prescription drugs? Many teens obtain prescription drugs from their family or friends. Teens find prescription drugs and OTC (over the counter) drugs in their home medicine cabinet or on the kitchen shelf. For persons aged 12 or older who used pain relievers, non-medically in the past year:

-53.0 percent got the drug they used most recently from a friend or relative for free.

-21.2 percent received them through a prescription from one doctor.

-10.6 percent bought the drug from a friend or relative.

- 4.3 percent got pain relievers from a drug dealer or other stranger

- 0.1 percent bought them on the Internet.

Possible warning signs of teen drug use

Teens are known to have mood swings. However, some behavior may indicate more serious issues, such as abuse of drugs and alcohol. Here are some of the warning signs of drug use.

*Problems at school: frequently forgetting homework, missing classes or skipping school, disinterest in school or school activities, a drop in grades.

*Physical signs: lack of energy and motivation, red eyes and cheeks or difficulty focusing – alcohol use. Red eyes and constricted pupils – marijuana use. A strange burn on your child's mouth or fingers – smoking something (possibly heroin or methamphetamine) through a metal or glass pipe. Chronic nosebleeds – cocaine abuse.

* Neglected appearance: lack of interest in clothing, grooming, or appearance is not normal. Teenagers are usually very concerned about how they look.

*Changes in behavior: teenagers enjoy privacy, but be aware of excessive attempts to be alone, exaggerated efforts not to allow family members into their rooms, not letting you know where they go with friends, or whom they go with, breaking curfew without a good excuse, changes in relationships with family.

*Changes in friends: no longer friends with childhood friends, seems interested in hanging out with older kids, acts secretive about spending time with new friends.

*Money issues: sudden requests for money without a good reason, money stolen from your wallet or from safe places at home, items gone from your home. (May be sold to buy drugs.)

*Drug paraphernalia: finding items in your child's room, backpack, or car related to drug use.

Why Teens Abuse Medicine

Teens abuse prescription drugs for several reasons including:

- To get high. Many prescription drugs can make you feel good.
- To feel better. Teens who suffer from stress-related disorders and depression may try prescription drugs.
- To help concentrate doing schoolwork/to get better grades.
- To perform better in sports.
- Curiosity and to try a daring behavior.

**In some cases, boys and girls will abuse some type of prescription drugs for a specific purpose. For example, boys are more likely to abuse prescription stimulants to get high, while girls tend to abuse them to stay alert or lose weight.

What You Can Do

Because prescription drugs are legal, they are easily accessible. Parents, law enforcement, educators, the medical community, and all levels of government have a role to play in reducing the nonmedical use of prescription drugs.

Talk with your teen about the consequences of using prescription and OTC drugs non-medically and the importance of healthy choices.

- Choose the right time to talk. When talking to your child, be sure your child is sober or has not been using drugs before talking about drugs and alcohol.
- Voice your suspicion. Begin by expressing your concerns without making accusations.
- Be specific. Explain what you observed to make you concerned. For example, you found missing pills or an empty pill bottle. Or your child's appearance indicates a problem. learn the facts
- Be prepared for strong reactions. Your child may accuse you of snooping or say you're crazy. Stay calm.
- Reinforce what you think about drug use. Tell her how much you care for him or her. Get help from the experts. Contact the school counselor, school nurse, or family doctor about your concerns.
- TIP: A teen that is using drugs or alcohol needs to be evaluated by a professional for a possible substance abuse disorder.

Ask teens what they find out about prescription drugs at school, at friends' homes, at parties, and on social media sites.

Get information about teen abuse of prescription drug medications. Learn what the medication is used for, what it looks like, its effects and interactions, and how teens are using it.

Understand the power and danger of these medications. Many medications, particularly narcotic pain relievers (opioid medications), are very powerful and are designed to relieve extreme pain. New medications are continually being approved for medical use, and it is important to be informed about the drugs' uses and properties.

Follow disposal guidelines. Learn how to dispose of unused medicines by visiting the DEA Diversion website http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/. Read more about safe drug disposal and get information on drug poisoning.

<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm>

Ask your doctor, dentist, and pharmacist about the medications you are prescribed. Ask about their side effects, interactions, and potential addictiveness.

Review what is in your medicine cabinet. Lock up powerful medications in a safe place, not in the family medicine or kitchen cabinet. Count your pills when you receive them, and periodically check to see how many are in the container. Avoid keeping prescription painkillers or sedatives around "just in case."

Read the labels. The prescription label includes important information about how much to take, interactions, and the ingredients. Many generic prescriptions are substituted for brand name drugs. Usually, the generic name of the drug is printed with the brand name, so that the customer knows which medication they receive. It may be easy to overlook the fact that the doctor has prescribed a very powerful narcotic painkiller.

Remember: Use of Rx medicines without a doctor's recommendation can be just as dangerous as using illegal drugs. Improper use can have serious health effects, including addiction and overdose.