

## Taking It Seriously

Some people experiment with prescription drugs because they think they will help them have more fun, lose weight, fit in, and even study more effectively. Some people think that prescription drugs are safer and less addictive than street drugs; after all, these are drugs that moms, dads, and even kid brothers and sisters use. Other people who try prescription drugs think they're not doing anything illegal because these drugs are prescribed by doctors. But taking drugs without a prescription - or sharing a prescription drug with friends - is actually breaking the law.

*"Due to the abundance of prescription medications, drug overdoses are now the leading cause of accidental death in our state. That means you or a loved one are more likely to die from a drug overdose than from a car crash."* Washington State Attorney General Rob McKenna

For information on how and where to dispose of unwanted medications, please check the following website:  
<http://www.atg.wa.gov/page.aspx?id=23610>

## Sources For This Brochure Include:

Partnership for a Drug Free America:  
<http://www.drugfree.org/>

National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign,  
Office of National Drug Control Policy:  
[www.TheAntiDrug.com](http://www.TheAntiDrug.com)

Washington State Attorney General's Office:  
<http://www.atg.wa.gov/prescriptiondrug.aspx>

Students Against Destructive Decisions  
(SADD): <http://www.sadd.org/>

Special Thanks to the Seattle Public Schools  
Teen Health Center Staff for their contributions



Seattle Police Department  
For Emergencies call 9-1-1  
Non Emergencies: 206.625.5011  
[www.seattle.gov/police](http://www.seattle.gov/police)

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## Prescription & Over-The-Counter Drug Abuse



Every day in America, 2,500 teenagers use a prescription drug to get high for the first time.

In Washington State, there are more deaths annually from prescription drug abuse than from meth, cocaine, and heroin combined.

Get Informed. Take Action.



## The Problem

Teens are abusing prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications to get high. And as much as we may not want to admit it, often our teens are getting these drugs from our medicine cabinets. Seventy percent of people age 12 and older who abuse prescription painkillers say they get them from relatives and friends, typically without their knowledge.

The prescription drugs teens are abusing include painkillers, such as those drugs prescribed after surgery; depressants, such as sleeping pills or anti-anxiety drugs; and stimulants, such as those drugs prescribed for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Teens are also abusing OTC drugs, such as cough and cold remedies.

### Brand Names of Some of These Drugs

- **Painkillers:** Vicodin, Tylenol with Codeine, OxyContin, Percocet
- **Depressants:** Klonopin, Nembutal, Soma, Valium, Xanax
- **Stimulants:** Adderall, Concerta, Dexedrine, Ritalin
- **OTCs:** Coricidin HBP Cough and Cold, Robitussin, Vicks Formula 44, Cough Relief, and others

## Signs of Potential Abuse

- **Pain reliever abuse:** constricted pupils, nausea, vomiting, respiratory depression (inadequate ventilation)
- **Stimulant abuse:** anxiety, delusions, flushed skin, chest pain with heart palpitations
- **Depressant abuse:** slurred speech, dizziness, Respiratory depression

Parents should be alert to personality changes, mood swings, irritability, excessive energy, sleepiness or avoiding sleep, sweating, loss of appetite, forgetfulness, or clumsiness.

Watch for signs around the house such as missing pills, unfamiliar pills, or empty cough and cold medicine bottles or packages.

If your teen has a prescription, keep control of the bottle. Be alert to your teen running out of pills quickly, losing pills, or requesting refills.

Other signs might include secretiveness, loss of interest in personal appearance, borrowing money or having extra cash, skipping classes, or not doing well in school.

## What Adults Can Do

### Monitor

- Take note of how many pills are in each of your prescription bottles or pill packets.
- Keep track of your refills. This goes for your own medication, as well as for your teens and other members of the household. If you find you need to refill your medication more often than expected, that could indicate a problem.
- If your teen has been prescribed a drug, be sure you control the medication; monitor dosages and refills.
- Make sure your friends and relatives - especially grandparents - are also aware of the risks. Encourage them to regularly monitor their own medicine cabinets.
- If there are other households to which your teen has access, talk to those families as well about the importance of helping safeguard medications.

### Secure

Approach securing your prescriptions the same way you would other valuables in your home, like jewelry or cash. There's no shame in protecting those items; the same holds for your medications.

- Take prescription meds out of the medicine cabinet and hide them in a place only you know about.
- If possible, keep all medicines - prescription and over-the-counter - in a safe place, such as a locked cabinet your teen cannot access.
- Tell relatives, especially grandparents, to lock their medications or keep them in a safe place.
- Talk to the parents of your teenager's friends. Encourage them to secure their prescriptions.

### Dispose

- Take an inventory of all of the prescription drugs in your home. Discard expired or unused prescription drugs, when your teens are not home.
- Dispose of unused meds by taking them to one of the state's medicine return locations or by removing them from their bottles, putting them in a plastic bag, mixing them with an unpleasant substance like coffee grounds or cat litter (drug users will retrieve discarded prescription drugs from the trash) and throwing them in the garbage.
- Unless the directions on the packaging say otherwise, do not flush medication down the drain or toilet because they could pollute the water supply.
- To help prevent unauthorized refills and protect your and your family's privacy, remove any personal, identifiable information from prescription bottles or pill packages before you throw them away.