

Teens and Prescription Drug Abuse

Imagine a life for your children without the risk of prescription drug abuse.

Ask your teens
what they know about
prescription drugs.
**THEIR ANSWERS
MAY SURPRISE YOU.**

Everyone is susceptible to prescription drug abuse, especially young people. As many as one in five teens have taken prescription drugs for a non-medical reason. Easy accessibility and a naiveté to the dangers make this possible.

Knowingly or not, teens most commonly take a family member or friend's prescription drugs. Initially they might be curious about the drug's effects, but the behavior can develop quickly into an addiction with negative results.

THE CYCLE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

Social pressures, stress relief, and increasing focus for work and school are common motivations for misusing prescription drugs. Because these medications activate the brain's reward

center, it's easy to become addicted and continually use them despite serious consequences. Abusing medications impairs a teen's judgment, and it can lead to car accidents, criminal actions, illegal drug use, decreased performance at school, and relationship problems.

COMMONLY ABUSED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Painkillers

- Opioids, such as oxycodone (Oxycotin) and hydrocodone (Vicodin):
 - Symptoms of abuse include sweating, confusion, slowed breathing, lower blood pressure, poor coordination, and depression.
 - A person abusing opioids, or painkillers, is at risk for choking, dangerously low blood pressure and breathing rate, and inducing a coma.

Stimulants

- Methylphenidate (Ritalin) used to treat ADHD and sleep disorders:
 - Abuse symptoms include dizziness, poor judgment, rapid eye movement, drowsiness, and imbalance.
 - Abusing stimulants places one at risk for heart problems, seizures, paranoia, and hallucinations.

Sedatives

- Alprazolam (Xanax) or Zolpidem (Ambien) prescribed for anxiety and sleep disorders:
 - Symptoms of stimulant abuse include restlessness, irregular heartbeat, insomnia, high blood pressure,

irritability, and weight loss.

- When stimulants are abused, a person is at risk for memory loss. Overdose can lead to a coma or death.

ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Be aware** - Educate your teen about the risks of drug abuse. If they are taking a prescription medication from their doctor, teach them to use it properly
- ✓ **Practice saying no** - Is your teen experiencing peer pressure to abuse drugs? Talk with them openly about better ways to feel good and succeed without drugs.
- ✓ **Lower accessibility** - Keep your own medications safeguarded. Be aware of how many pills you should have and how many your teen should have if they take medication.
- ✓ **Seek a doctor's help** - Consult a doctor immediately if your child needs to detox from a substance. Side effects of withdrawal can be serious.

KEEP IN MIND

As with any substance abuse, help is available. Psychotherapy and support groups can be valuable resources for your teen and family. Remember, your teens are watching you and how you behave as an adult. Set a positive and responsible example for them.

What steps will you take today to help your family be free from the threat of prescription drug abuse?