

## **TEEN PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE**

- Prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing drug problem in the U.S.
- One in four teens report having misused or abused prescription medicine.
- More than half of teens said it was easy to get these medicines from their parent's medicine cabinet.

### **THE ABUSE OF PRESCRIPTION & OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS**

The following are conveniently available to teens:

- **PAINKILLERS** (Vicodin, Tylenol with Codeine, OxyContin, Percocet), such as those prescribed after surgery
- **DEPRESSANTS** (Klonopin, Nembutal, Soma, Valium, Xanax)
- **STIMULANTS** (Adderall, Concerta, Dexedrine, Ritalin)
- **OVER-THE-COUNTER** (Coricidin HBP Cough and Cold, Robitussin, Vicks Formula 44 Cough Relief, and others)

Prescription drugs provide benefits when used as prescribed. But when abused, they can be just as dangerous as illicit drugs. Everyday 2,500 youth ages 12-17 abuse a pain reliever for the very first time and 12 and 13 year olds indicate that prescription drugs are their drug of choice, because these drugs are so readily available. 56% are obtained without cost from their home, a friend or relative, while 19% are prescribed by a doctor.

### **WHAT ARE THE DANGERS?**

- A single large dose of prescription or over-the-counter painkillers or depressants can cause breathing difficulty that can lead to death.
- Stimulant abuse can lead to hostility or paranoia, potential for heart system failure, or fatal seizures.
- Even in small doses, depressants and painkillers have subtle effects on motor skills, judgment, and ability to learn, which can increase the risk of injury.
- The abuse of over-the-counter cough and cold remedies can cause blurred vision, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, coma, and even death.

### **MIXING**

Many teens report mixing prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, and alcohol. Using these drugs in combination can cause respiratory failure and death.

### **WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?**

Think about your home. What prescription and over-the-counter drugs do you have? Where are they kept? Would you know if some were missing? The good news is that you can take steps immediately to limit access to these drugs and help keep your teen drug-free.

- Recognize all medicines have risks along with benefits.
- Never share medications or use them outside of a prescriber’s care and supervision. Sharing medications is illegal and dangerous.
- Store any prescription medications in a locked cabinet or box.
- Safeguard all drugs at home. Monitor quantities and control access. Take note of how many pills are in a bottle or pill packet, and keep track of refills.
- If your teen has been prescribed a drug, be sure you control the medication and monitor dosages and refills.
- Set clear rules for teens about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider’s advice and proper dosages.
- Be a good role model by following these same rules with your own medicines. Examine your own behavior to ensure you set a good example. If you misuse your prescription drugs your teen will take notice.
- Properly conceal and dispose of old or unused medicines.
  - Don’t flush pills or liquid medication down the toilet or drain. Flushing pollutes drinking water and potentially harms aquatic life.
  - Remove medicine from containers and destroy labels to help protect privacy.
  - Syringes and Sharps should be placed in a rigid or metal container with a screw-on cap or purchase a special container at your pharmacy.
  - The best way to dispose of old or unused medications is to contact the Colorado Medication Take-Back Project (303) 692-2903 or [coloradomedtakeback.info](http://coloradomedtakeback.info) Narcotics and other controlled substances, syringes or injectable medicines are **NOT ACCEPTED**.
  - Visit [colorado.gov/cdphe/rxdrug](http://colorado.gov/cdphe/rxdrug) for law enforcement take-back locations. These sites **ACCEPT** narcotics and controlled substances.
  - You may also obtain advice for proper disposal of medications from your pharmacist.

## COMMUNICATION

- Talk to your kids and find out what they know about prescription medications.
- Explain to family members that, when used without a doctor’s supervision, these medications can be a dangerous and as addictive as illicit drugs.
- If there are other households your teen has access to, talk to those family members, especially grandparents, about keeping prescription medications out of the reach of teens.

## RESOURCES TO USE & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Teen Prescription Drug Abuse ([www.TheAntiDrug.com](http://www.TheAntiDrug.com)) (1-800-788-2800 for free materials (for treatment - [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov))
- Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Program of Peer Assistance Services, Inc. (303)369-0039) ([www.PeerAssistanceServices.org/prescription](http://www.PeerAssistanceServices.org/prescription))
- National youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign Office of National Drug Control Policy



everychild.one voice.

7859 W 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue . Wheat Ridge, CO 80033 . (303)420-7820 . (888)225-8234  
 Fax: (303)420-7703 . Email: [office@copta.org](mailto:office@copta.org) . Web site: [www.copta.org](http://www.copta.org)