

An Issue of Influence...

Prescription Drug Abuse



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The new drug of choice for many teens could be sitting in your medicine cabinet, or somewhere in your house. A number of national studies and published reports indicate that the intentional abuse of prescription drugs, such as pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants and sedatives, to get high is a growing issue particularly among youth; and it is growing in Minnesota. In fact, among young people ages 12-17, prescription drugs have become the second most abused illegal drug, behind marijuana.

Youth are abusing prescription drugs because they believe that these drugs provide a medically safe high and can get prescription drugs easily and for free, often from friends or relatives. They are also able to get these medications online from other countries without a prescription. Pain relievers such as OxyContin and Vicodin and Adderall are found the most commonly abused prescription drugs. On a national level, nearly one in five teens (19% or 4.5 million) report abusing prescription medications that were not prescribed to them. (PATS, 2006) and it is not just prescription drugs that are an issue. Four percent of 8th graders, five percent of 10th graders, and seven percent of 12th graders reported taking medicines with dextromethorphan (DXM) during the past year to get high. (MTF, 2006) Dextromethorphan (DXM) is a cough suppressant found in many over-the-counter cough and cold remedies.

Even more disturbing, adolescents are more likely than young adults to become dependent on prescription medication due to their developing brain. Teens admit to abusing prescription medicine for reasons other than getting high, including to relieve pain or anxiety, to sleep better, to experiment, to help with concentration or

to increase alertness. (Boyd, McCabe, Cranford and Young, 2006). This is another reason they are at such a high risk for addiction. And while they don't believe prescription drugs are addictive, they are mentally and chemically programming their brain to associate relief for the above mentioned problems with use of prescription drugs. In the last 10 years, the number of teens going into treatment for addiction to prescription pain relievers has increased by more than 300 percent. (TEDS, 2006)

Without consulting a doctor, there is a tremendous safety issue that results. The most recent research on deaths in the U.S. due to poisoning over a five-year period (1999-2004) shows that nearly all poison deaths in the country are attributed to drugs and most drug poisonings result from the abuse of prescription and illegal drugs. (CDC, 2007) Some drugs prescribed for pain work on your brain's respiratory center and when mixed with alcohol or other drugs can cause a person to stop breathing. Stimulant medication can cause your heart to race and cause irregular heart rhythms which can result in a heart attack at any age. There are many dangers of abusing drugs that are not prescribed for you.

For information on specific prescription or over the counter medications:

hubbardcountydrugfree.org
Click on Drug Facts

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Prescription drugs that are most commonly abused :

Opioids are prescribed to alleviate pain. Oxycodone (OxyContin), propoxyphene (Darvon), hydrocodone (Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid) and meperidine (Demerol) are examples. **CNS depressants** slow normal brain function and are used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders or used as general anesthetics. Tranquilizers and sedatives Barbiturates (Amytal, Nembutal, Seconal, Phenobarbital), benzodiazepines (Valium, Xanax) and flunitrazepam (Rohypnol) are examples. • **Stimulants** increase alertness, attention and energy, which are accompanied by increases in blood pressure, heart rate and respiration. Stimulants are prescribed to treat narcolepsy,



Safeguard all drugs in your home. Know and monitor the quantities and control access to them. Take note of how many pills are in a bottle or pill packet, and keep track of refills. This goes for your own medication, as well as for other members of your household. If you find you have to refill medication more often than expected, there could be a real problem—someone may be taking your medication without your knowledge. If your child has been prescribed a drug, be sure you control the medication, and monitor dosages and refills.

Set clear rules for your child about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider's advice and dosages. Make sure your child uses prescription drugs only as directed by a medical provider and follows instructions for OTC products carefully. This includes taking the proper dosage and not using with other substances without a medical provider's approval. No one should ever take prescription or OTC drugs with street drugs or alcohol. If you have any questions about how to take a drug, call your family physician or pharmacist.

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, such as share them with your kids, or abuse them, your child will take notice. Avoid sharing your drugs and always follow the medical provider's instructions.

Properly conceal and dispose of old or unused medicines in the trash. Unused prescription drugs should be hidden and thrown away in the trash. So that others don't take them out of the trash, you can mix them with an undesirable substance (like used coffee grounds or kitty litter) and put the mixture in an empty can or bag. Unless the directions say otherwise, do NOT flush medications down the drain or toilet because the chemicals can pollute the water supply. Also, remove any personal, identifiable information from prescription bottles or pill packages before you throw them away.

Ask friends and family to safeguard their prescription drugs as well. Make sure your friends and relatives, especially grandparents, know about the risks, too, and encourage them to regularly monitor their own medicine cabinets. If there are other households your child has access to, talk to those families as well about the importance of safeguarding medications. If you don't know the parents of your child's friends, then make an effort to get to know them, and get on the same page about rules and expectations for use of all drugs, including alcohol and illicit drugs. Follow up with your child's school administration to find out what they are doing to address issues of prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse in schools.

Educate yourself and talk to your child about the dangers of abusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs. These are powerful drugs that, when abused, can be just as dangerous as street drugs. Tell your teen the risks far outweigh any "benefits."

It's an Issue of Influence.

Youth Event Calendar

Alternative High: Battle of the Bands

August 8th at the Laporte School

7:30-11:30pm

sponsored by the Regional Rock Sober

Rock Sober

Back to School Planning

August 10th 7:00- 9:00pm

Pine Beach Resort, Laporte

August 11th 5:00-6:30 pm @HAPA Office

Alternative High:

August 14th and 15th: Park Rapids

Youth Arts Festival

Downtown Park Rapids

Youth Music Showcase

August 15th, 7pm @

Park Rapids HS Auditorium

Rock Sober

August 17th 7:00- 9:00pm

Pine Beach Resort, Laporte

August 18th 5:00-6:30 pm @HAPA Office

Alternative High:

*Rock Sober Skate @ the Old Laporte
Town Hall 9-11 pm*

Rock Sober

Guest Speaker

August 24th 7:00- 9:00pm

Pine Beach Resort, Laporte

August 25th 5:00-6:30 pm @HAPA Office

Alternative High:

Back to School Bash

Music, Food and Fun

August 28th, 6pm -?

Downtown Park Rapids

