

**One in five teens** reports abusing them to get high. About **half of all students** have been offered the opportunity to abuse a prescription drug by their sophomore year in college.

#### Consider these facts:

- ☑ Teens are engaging in dangerous activities, such as crushing pills, then snorting or injecting their contents. They also combine them with alcohol or illicit drugs. At “pharming parties,” they may dump a variety of drugs in a bowl and take them without knowing what they are.
- ☑ Teens most commonly abuse pain relievers (e.g., OxyContin® and Vicodin®), stimulants (e.g., Ritalin® and Adderall®), and sedatives and tranquilizers (e.g., Valium® and Xanax®).
- ☑ It is surprisingly easy for teens to gain access to prescription drugs from their families’ medicine cabinets, a friend’s purse, and even a schoolmate’s locker!
- ☑ Young people sometimes illegally order controlled prescription drugs from illegal Web sites.

#### Practical advice for parents

As a parent, teach your teen to:

- ☑ **Respect** the power of medicine and use it properly.
- ☑ **Recognize** that all medicines, including prescription medications, have **risks** along with benefits. The risks tend to increase dramatically when medicines are abused.
- ☑ Take **responsibility** for learning how to take prescription medicines safely and appropriately, and seek help at the first sign of a problem –their own or a friend’s **abuse**.

Please remember that prescription medicines, when used correctly and under a doctor’s supervision, are safe and effective.

## Resources

**National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE)**

*Works to stimulate and improve communication of information on appropriate medicine use to consumers and health care professionals. Ph: 301-656-8565, [www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org)*

**National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Information for Parents and Teachers**

*Contains materials that are developed specifically with parents in mind. [www.nida.nih.gov/parent-teacher.html](http://www.nida.nih.gov/parent-teacher.html)*

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)**

*Promotes the availability and quality of community- based substance abuse treatment services for individuals and families who need them. Ph: 240-276-2750 [www.csat.samhsa.gov](http://www.csat.samhsa.gov)*

*To order SAMHSA publications, call SAMHSA’s Health Information Network (SHIN) at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 or visit <http://ncadi.samhsa.gov>*

**SAMHSA’s National Helpline**

*A national, toll-free referral service for locating drug and alcohol abuse treatment programs. For information or treatment referral, call: 800-662-HELP (800-662-4357) (English and Spanish); 800-487-4889 (TDD) (Toll-Free) Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator: [www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov)*

**SAMHSA’s Family Guide**

*A public education Web site that serves as a family guide to keep youth mentally healthy and drug free. Ph: 240-276-2548, [www.family.samhsa.gov](http://www.family.samhsa.gov)*

**Healthy Communities that Care**

*An initiative and coalition that brings Livingston County community members together to address youth issues; specifically underage and binge drinking, marijuana use and Rx abuse. Ph: 585-748-5146, [www.gvhp.org](http://www.gvhp.org), click on “Our Projects”, go to “Healthy Communities that Care”.*

**Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse of Liv. Co.**

*Provides prevention and treatment services to Livingston County. General information call: 585-243-9210, Prevention Call: 243-9236, <http://www.casaoflc.org/>*

# TALKING To Teens

## About Prescription Drug Abuse

**Stop Rx Abuse Before It Starts**



**HEALTHY YOUTH®**  
Livingston County, NY

in partnership with

*Wegmans*  
**pharmacy**

## What do parents need to know?

As a parent of a teenager, you may have spoken to your child about illegal drugs and their harmful effects. But did you know that legally prescribed medicines are also a cause of concern? Today, more than before, an alarming number of teenagers are more likely to have abused prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs than illegal drugs like ecstasy, cocaine, crack, and methamphetamines.

**The hidden dangers of prescription medicine abuse include dependence, slower brain activity, irregular heartbeats, dangerously high body temperature, heart failure, slowed respiration or lethal seizures. Prescription drug abuse increases emergency room visits and suicide attempts, with nearly 500,000 emergency room visits for abuse of prescription or OTC drugs in 2004.**

**The easiest way for teens to obtain prescription medicines is from their friends or their parents' medicine cabinets. It could easily happen in your own home!**

- Nearly one in five teens (19 percent, or 4.5 million people) report abusing prescription medications to get high.
- Two in five teens (40 percent, or 9.4 million people) believe that prescription medicines, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor, are "much safer" to use than illegal drugs.
- Teens are misusing everything from pain relievers like OxyContin® and Vicodin® to stimulants, sedatives, and tranquilizers like Valium®. Teens also commonly misuse ADHD medications like Adderall® and Ritalin®.

Believe it or not, **parents can make a difference.** Kids who continue to learn about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs. **But it's up to you to talk about it openly with your kids.**

## Understanding "Generation Rx"

Did you know that teens as young as 12, as well as college students between ages 18 and 25, have among the highest rates of prescription drug abuse? This is why it is important for you, as a parent, to address this with your child at an early age. So what causes today's teens to abuse prescription drugs to get high? Among the factors are a series of misconceptions, lack of information, and a care-free attitude toward the risks involved in using prescription medicines improperly.

### Why do kids abuse prescription drugs?

- They are seeking psychological or physical pleasure.
- They want to fit in with groups of friends and are in search of acceptance and bonding.
- They do not realize the risks of taking medicines that have not been prescribed specifically for them or the danger of not following a prescription's directions.
- It is easier to get prescription drugs than illegal drugs.

### Believe it or not, many teens believe in the following misconceptions:

- Prescription medicines, even if not prescribed by a doctor, are much safer to use than illegal drugs.
- Prescription pain relievers cannot be addictive.
- Once in a while, there is nothing wrong with using prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription.

**As a parent, this is where you come in. You need to explain to your teen the dangers of prescription drug abuse.**

## Recognize the signs of prescription drug abuse

As a parent, the best way to prevent prescription drug abuse is to first educate yourself. That way, you can accurately and adequately present the facts when you talk with your teen.

Be sure you can recognize the signs of prescription drug abuse. Some of the warning signs are:

- Fatigue, red or glazed eyes, and repeated health complaints.
- Sudden mood changes, including irritability, negative attitude, personality changes, and general lack of interest in hobbies/activities.
- Change in sleep patterns
- Sudden weight loss/gain
- Easily agitated
- Out of the ordinary spending of money
- Secretiveness and withdrawing from family.
- Decreased or obsessive interest in school work.
- Missing prescription medicines from your medicine cabinet. Check frequently!
- Additional filled prescriptions on your pharmacy record that you did not fill.

Some of these warning signs might signal other problems as well. If you recognize any of these signs, contact the resources provided in this brochure, or your teen's physician or other health care professional.