

Prescription Drug Awareness *What you need to know*

Facts about Prescription Drug Use

- Prescription drugs are more abused than all illegal drugs combined (except marijuana).
- Prescription drug deaths now outnumber traffic fatalities in the U.S.
- Many addictions begin with treatment of legitimate health issues.
- High performing students and athletes are vulnerable to addiction.
- Prescription medicines are now the most commonly abused drugs among 12 to 13 year old children.
- Programs that aim to curb teen prescription drug abuse have the best results when a school-based program is combined with a home-based intervention.



References: NCAPDA; drugfree.org; medicineabuseproject.org; cdc.gov;
Max Crowley, an NIH Research Fellow at Duke's Center for Child and Family Policy.

Educate

What does prescription drug abuse look like?

- Kids from upper middle class communities are more likely to use alcohol and other drugs than their peers from lower income communities. Disposable income, disconnected families, and pressure to succeed all contribute to drug use among upscale youth.
- Some addictions in young people can be as a result of a sporting injury where a narcotic has been prescribed. Disbursement of pain medication should be monitored by an adult.
- Adderall is often sold by students on high school campuses, especially during finals to help kids focus and cram for tests.
- The most commonly abused prescription drugs are Opioids, such as OxyContin, and Vicodin. Both can be highly addictive.
- Law enforcement is seeing a dramatic increase in heroin use among upper middle class teens. Teens see it as a cheaper, easier to find alternative to prescription drugs.
- Prescription drugs are being stolen from parent's, grandparent's, neighbor's and friend's medicine cabinets. Lock up prescription drugs and properly dispose of old medications. Most police stations have a drop off box for old medications.



Equip

What steps can you take to protect your family?



- Talk to your kids starting at an early age. Children who learn about the dangers of drugs, alcohol and prescription drug abuse early and often are much less likely to develop addiction than those who do not receive these critical messages at home.
- If you suspect a problem, get help. Don't wait or assume it will go away.
- Trust your instincts.

- Be aware of:
 - Sudden changes in relationships with family or friends, anxiety, erratic mood swings or decreased interest in friends or activities they used to enjoy.
 - Change in homework habits, grades, and school absences.
 - Belongings, cash and jewelry disappearing. Unusual objects such as straws, burnt spoons, aluminum foil or medicine bottles.

Empower

What you can do if you suspect your child is using:

- Have a conversation not a confrontation. Keep a cool head and don't overreact. Try to move forward in a positive direction with clear expectations.
- Do not start the conversation when you can tell your child is under the influence of alcohol or drugs or is upset. Wait until things calm down.
- Be direct - clearly explain your concerns; any evidence you've found with as little emotion as possible - ex: I've noticed you have not been showering, your grades have dropped, and I found empty beer cans in your car, etc. Be sure you listen, and don't lecture.
- Be aware of your tone - speak in a calm and relaxed voice.
- Let your teen know you value their honesty and are willing to listen without making judgments (this doesn't mean there will not be consequences).
- Communicate unconditional love - physical connection can play an important role. Put a hand on your teen's shoulder or give him a hug when it feels right.
- Give lots of praise and positive feedback - teens need to hear the "good stuff" just like the rest of us. They need to know you can still see beyond the things they've done wrong.

Click here for a printable tip sheet of "Red Flags - Signs that your child may be engaging in drugs and what you can do to help them." Once the link is on we need to insert it.

What's Next?

Who Can Help My Teen?

- Always consider outside professional help (see below)
- Other family members
- Counselor
- Sports coach
- Member of the Clergy
- Neighbor
- Pediatrician/family doctor
- Treatment center

Resources for help:

[Discovery Counseling Center](#)

[Axis Community Health](#)

[Muir Wood Adolescent & Family Services](#)

References: *NCAPDA, drugfree.org, teens.drugabuse.gov, medicineabuseproject.org*