

Teen prescription drug abuse

More teens are abusing prescription medicines than ever—it's important to know the facts, the signs of abuse, what you can do, and the resources available to help you.

Facts

- 1 in 4 teens has misused or abused a prescription drug at least once in their lifetime. That is a 33% increase since 2008.
- 1 out of 3 of teens say they believe, “it’s okay to use prescription drugs that were not prescribed to them to deal with an injury, illness or physical pain.”
- 43% of teens indicate prescription drugs are easier to get than illegal drugs.
- 4 out of 10 teens who have misused or abused a prescription drug obtained it from their parent’s medicine cabinet.

2013 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, Teens and Parents, sponsored by The Partnership At Drugfree.org and MetLife Foundation, released April 23, 2014.

Signs

Personal Appearance

- Messy, shows lack of caring for appearance
- Poor hygiene
- Red, flushed cheeks or face
- Constricted eye pupils or frequent use of eye drops
- Needle marks

- Unusual smells on breath, body or clothing

Personal Habits or Actions

- Frequently breaks curfew
- Cash flow problems
- Avoids eye contact
- Locked doors
- Secretive phone calls
- Dropping one group of friends for another

School- or Work-Related Issues

- Truancy or loss of interest in schoolwork
- Loss of interest in extracurricular activities, hobbies, or sports
- Failure to fulfill responsibilities at school or work

Behavioral Issues

- Change in relationships with family members or friends
- Loss of inhibitions
- Mood changes or emotional instability (including irritability and/or anger outbursts)
- Sullen, withdrawn, depressed
- Slurred speech

- Unusually tired or a tendency to “nod off” unexpectedly
- Mental confusion
- Problems with attention, memory and coordination
- Taking money, valuables or prescription meds from home
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation or giddiness
- Seems lethargic or spaced out
- Sudden onset of poor judgment and/or reckless behavior

Health Issues

- Frequent sickness
- Queasy, nauseous
- Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain
- Accidents or injuries
- Sweatiness
- Constipation or increased use of laxatives
- Periods of passing out
- Runny nose or nose sores

What you can do

- Talk to your kids about the dangers of taking prescription drugs.
- Use blocks of time such as after dinner, before bedtime or driving to activities to talk about drugs and why they’re harmful.
- Take advantage of everyday ‘teachable moments’ such as commercials, celebrity news, etc. to point out things you’d like your child to know about.
- Safeguard and properly dispose of medications in your home.

Resources

The Partnership at Drugfree.org

Provides information and resources on teen drug use and addiction for parents to help them prevent and intervene in their children’s drug use or find treatment for a child who needs it.

drugfree.org or 1-855-378-4373

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Find locations for residential, outpatient, and hospital inpatient treatment programs for drug addiction and alcoholism throughout the country.

findtreatment.samhsa.gov or
1-800-662-HELP

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The CDC website features a section devoted to opioid information, data and FAQs. In addition, there are guidelines for prescribing opioids for chronic pain to help ensure patients have access to safer treatment options.

cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/patients.html

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

NIDA provides information on commonly abused drugs, the latest science and treatments, trends and statistics to improve individual and public health.

drugabuse.gov

The American Society of Addiction Medicine

A society of physicians aimed at increasing access to addiction treatment. They offer a nationwide directory of addiction medicine professionals.

asam.org

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