

TEEN TURNING POINTS



Teens and Prescription Drug Misuse

When used as directed by your doctor, prescription drugs can treat many illnesses and can have few side effects. When prescription drugs are misused, however, they can cause serious health problems and even death. Prescription drugs are popular among teens and young adults who may believe that they are safer to use than alcohol and illegal drugs. Using prescription drugs for non-medical purposes is not safe. After marijuana, prescription drugs are the second most commonly abused category of drugs. Prescription drugs are even more often abused than cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. In Michigan in 2012, there were 941 deaths due to unintentional drug poisonings.

Prescription drugs can be found in nearly every home in America, and the ease of their availability makes them a serious threat to those with substance use issues and teens. Thankfully, there are many ways to prevent prescription drug misuse.

Dangers of Prescription Drugs

Some teens and young people use prescription drugs because they believe them to be safer than street drugs. This is not true. Prescription pain medications such as Vicodin and OxyContin are opioids, exactly like heroin. Once due almost exclusively to heroin use, opiate overdoses are now increasingly due to the abuse of prescription pain killers. In the U.S., the number of overdose deaths from opioid pain killers surpasses the number of overdose deaths from heroin and cocaine combined. Prescription painkillers benefit many Americans when used appropriately, but when abused, they can be just as addictive and dangerous as illegal drugs.

Ways to Prevent Prescription Drug Misuse

- Parents should talk to their teens about the dangers of taking prescription medications without a prescription. Significant damage can be done by self-medicating. It is important for your teen to understand the importance of talking with a doctor about all medications and dosages.

- Make sure your teen isn't purchasing prescription drugs online. Some companies sell counterfeit and harmful medications on the internet.
- Keep your medicine cabinet locked or keeping prescription medications in a secured location. Do what you can to keep these medications out of the reach of your children or other family members with substance use issues.
- Monitor the number of pills in the bottle or pill packet so that you can tell if any go missing, and keep track of refill.
- Never share a prescription medication with someone else that was specifically prescribed to you. Your doctor knows your symptoms, medical history, and the medication and dosage that is right for you, which may be completely different than what's right for your child, friend, or colleague.
- Always dispose of prescription drugs as soon as they expire, and make sure to dispose of any extra medication if there is any left that you did not use. Take a look at the bottle for instructions on disposal.

If You Need Help...

You can call Crisis Services at (810) 257-3740 or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where someone is available 24 hours a day. For non-emergency services, call (810) 257-3742. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. Visit www.stopprescriptionabuse.com for more information. www.genhs.org

