

Remember that:

- Prescription drug abuse is using medication for something other than its intended use or that has not been prescribed to you.
- Misuse is incorrectly taking medicines that have been prescribed to you, often because of lack of information or understanding of how to use it safely and appropriately.
- If abused, some medications can slow breathing, cause irregular heartbeats, be easily addictive, and even kill you.
- One out of 4 teens knows a friend who abuses medicines to get high. Every day, nearly 3,000 teens try to abuse prescription medicines to get high for the first time.
- Prescription medicines can be safe when used correctly under a doctor's supervision. But using prescription drugs that aren't intended for you or mixing them with any amount of alcohol or illicit drugs can result in serious health conditions—some of which are fatal.
- If you have a friend who has had severe mood changes, is hanging out with a new crowd, or has less interest in school and hobbies, he or she may be abusing prescription drugs. But help is available and recovery is possible.

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 (NCPPIE)

NCPPIE is a multi-disciplinary coalition of over 100 organizations working to stimulate and improve communication of information on appropriate medicine use to consumers and health care professionals.

301-656-8565

www.talkaboutrx.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) for Teens

NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. NIDA created this Web site to educate adolescents ages 11 through 15 (as well as their parents and teachers) on the science behind drug abuse.

301-443-1124

www.teens.drugabuse.gov

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

CSAT promotes the availability and quality of community-based substance abuse treatment services for individuals and families who need them. It supports policies and programs to broaden the range of evidence-based effective treatment services for people who abuse alcohol and drugs and that also address other addiction-related health and human services problems.

240-276-2750

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

The National Helpline is 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) (Toll-Free)

(English and Spanish)

800-487-4889 (TDD) (Toll-Free)

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator:

www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

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PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

They can help but also hurt

Not Worth The Risk

X even if it's legal

EDUCATE before
YOU MEDICATE



The NCPPIE
Coalition—working
together to promote
safe medicine use

Abusing prescription drugs—no big deal. Right?

Wrong! Prescription drug abuse is using a medication in a different way than how it should be used. Even if a medicine is specifically prescribed for you, if you don't follow the instructions for using it safely, it may have the potential to be misused. But taking medicine that wasn't prescribed for you at all is abuse. **It's no different than abusing alcohol or illicit drugs.**

Many teens believe that prescription drugs are safer than alcohol or illicit drugs, and that abusing them isn't risky—**but it is.**

What could possibly happen to me?

You've probably heard the message countless times. Using alcohol and drugs can cause addiction and maybe even kill you. But what about prescription drugs? The truth is:

- Abusing certain painkillers—like OxyContin®—is a lot **like abusing heroin** because their ingredients are very similar.
- Sleeping pills can slow your breathing and your heart, which **can be fatal**—especially if combined with certain prescription pain medicines, alcohol, or over-the-counter cold remedies.
- Abusing medicines intended to treat ADHD can cause irregular heartbeats or deadly seizures. Mixing them with cold medicines could make these **dangerous effects** worse.

Myths

Let's say you are smart enough to avoid abusing prescription drugs. But chances are you may have a friend who may not be. One out of 4 teens knows a friend who abuses medicines to get high. Every day, nearly 3,000 teens try to abuse prescription medicines to get high for the first time. You are thinking, could it be that harmful?

However, many teens are simply unaware of the dangerous risks of prescription drug abuse:

- **MYTH:** Prescription painkillers, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor, are not addictive.

FACT: Abusing certain prescription painkillers is similar to abusing heroin.

- **MYTH:** There is nothing wrong with using prescription drugs without a doctor's consent.

FACT: Taking prescription medicine that your doctor didn't prescribe and doesn't know about can result in a dangerous situation if he or she actually prescribes medicine for you that should not be mixed with what you are abusing "on the sly."

- **MYTH:** If a prescription drug is legal and widely available, it must be safe.

FACT: Prescription drugs are safe when used correctly under a doctor's supervision. But taking prescription drugs that aren't intended for you and/or mixing them with alcohol or illicit drugs can result in potentially deadly consequences.

How do I know if one of my friends (or I) have a problem?

Prescription drugs are intended to make people who have a condition or illness better. When people use them for anything other than their recommended purposes, they are at risk for serious health consequences. Here are some things to look for if you suspect your friends are abusing prescription drugs:

- Are they hanging out with new friends or withdrawing from your group of friends entirely?
- Do these friends hold "pharming" parties or get-togethers where everyone contributes medicines that are taken, often with alcohol or other illegal substances?
- Is there a notable change in their personality? Are they starting more arguments?
- Do they seem more drowsy on some days and have a lot more energy on others?
- Are they less interested in hobbies or school activities that they had been involved with?

Because these signs could signal other problems, be sure to get help right away

What if I need help?

If you notice a friend who needs help for abusing prescription drugs—or if you feel your own misuse has spiraled out of control—there are ways to get help. Talk to a parent, teacher, guidance counselor, or other trusted adult. There also are additional helpful resources provided at the end of this brochure. The sooner you acknowledge the problem, the better the chances are of overcoming an addiction—and ultimately saving a life.