

An Ounce of Prevention

Having prescriptions drugs unsecured is just as dangerous as having a loaded gun in your home. Lock the lid on prescription and over-the-counter drugs getting into the wrong hands!

Prescription (Rx) drugs and over-the-counter (OTC) medications commonly found in homes has become a significant problem for teens and young adults. Lock the lid on Rx and OTC drugs getting into the wrong hands!

- 3/4 of people age 45 or older take an average of four prescription medications daily. (American Association of Retired Persons, AARP, 2009).
- Teens are abusing prescription drugs because they believe the myth that these drugs provide a medically safe high (Teens and Prescription Drugs—Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2007).
- Next to marijuana, prescription medications are the most common illegal drug used by teens to get high (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, SAMHSA, 2009).
- 70% of the Rx pain medications illegally used by teens were obtained from a relative or friend (Monitoring the Future National Survey, 2008).
- 75% of the 4,000 calls annually received by the New York City Poison Control Center requiring medical treatment involve children younger than 5 years of age (NYC Poison Control Center, 2007).
- The most recent Minnesota Student Survey indicated an increase in the number of 12th graders using prescription drugs to get high (Minnesota Student Survey, 2007).
- The number of teens going into treatment for addiction to prescription pain relievers has increased by more than 300% between 1996–2006 (Treatment Episode Data Source, TEDS, 2006).
- Abuse of prescription drugs for the first time before age 16 often leads to a greater risk of chemical dependency in later life (SAMHSA, 2006).
- It is a felony to intentionally give your own or anyone else's prescription medication to another person.

For more information, contact (insert local name, phone).

Resources available at www.drugfree.org

**Prescription and Over-The-Counter Drug Awareness
Provided by: Dakota County Attorney James C. Backstrom,
Safe & Drug Free Schools Coordinators, and Metro Regional Prevention Coordinator**

Sample Article

Text could be used (part or full) in a Newsletter, Bulletin or Letter to the Editor

Danger in Your Medicine Cabinet

Everyday in America 2,500 youth ages 12 to 17 abuse a pain reliever for the very first time. Where do they get the prescription drugs? Over 70% of these youth obtained pain relievers from a relative or friend.

Because these drugs are so readily available and many teens believe they are a safe way to get high, teens who wouldn't otherwise touch illicit drugs (cocaine, heroin, LSD) might abuse prescription (Rx) drugs— and not many parents are talking to them about the dangers. It's time to lock the lid on Prescription (Rx) and Over-the-Counter (OTC) to prevent drugs getting into the wrong hands!

Teens say they abuse Rx painkillers because they believe they are safer to use than illicit drugs, there is less shame attached to using them, there are fewer side effects than illicit drugs, and parents don't care as much if youth get caught.

Teens report that parental disapproval is a powerful means of keeping them away from drugs. What can you do as a parent? Think about your home - what Rx and OTC drugs do you have? Where are they kept? Would you know if some were missing? You can take steps immediately to limit access to these drugs and help keep your teen drug free.

Unsecured Rx drugs can be as dangerous as having a loaded gun in your home. **Talk to your teen** about the dangers of abusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs. These are powerful drugs that, when abused, can be just as dangerous as street drugs. Be sure your teen knows the risks far outweigh any "benefits" and it is illegal to use a prescription that is not written for *y-o-u*!

Checkout www.TheAntiDrug.com or call **1-800-788-2800**

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Sample News Release

News Release

Lock the Lid on Access to Prescription and Over-The-Counter Drugs: Dakota County Offers Resources to Reduce Youth Access to Dangerous Drugs

Tragically, overdoses of prescription medications are in the news. (Insert Agency/Group name) officials want citizens to know that by working together, with schools, medical profession, parents and treatment programs we can reduce access to prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications that could be abused.

This packet is designed to:

1. Increase awareness of Prescription (Rx) and Over-The-Counter (OTC) drug abuse;
2. Encourage monitoring quantities and safeguarding medications;
3. Educate yourself on proper disposal of medications; and
4. Keep our young people safe!

Residents throughout (this community) are asked to lock up medications and account for your prescriptions. If medications have expired or are no longer needed, dispose of them.

Drug Task Force said, "We invite everyone to get involved in this effort to keep drugs out of wrong hands and keep young people safe in our community."

County Attorney said, "This is an opportunity for citizens of your community to join other Americans and stand together to promote awareness, safety and healthy youth."

Chief / Sheriff added, "It is important to work together as law enforcement, medical professionals and citizens to keep our community safe."

Young people are more likely to use Rx medications because they believe they are safer to use than illicit drugs, there is less shame attached to using them, there are fewer side effects than illicit drugs, and parents don't care as much if youth get caught. Using Rx and OTC drugs as they were not intended is dangerous, has deadly consequences and is illegal!

For more information, contact (insert local name, phone).

Resources available at www.drugfree.org

Lock the lid on Rx and OTC drugs getting into the wrong hands!

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Talking Points for Medical Professionals

Healthcare Providers, Pharmacists and Retailers play a key role in preventing Prescription (Rx) and Over-the-Counter (OTC) drug misuse and abuse and can take action to prevent teen Rx and OTC drug abuse.

Role of the Pharmacist

- Provide clear information and advice about how to take a medication appropriately.
- Provide information about the effects the medication may have and any possible drug interactions.
- Help prevent Rx fraud by looking for false or altered forms.

Role of the Healthcare Provider

- Be aware of symptoms of Rx and OTC medication abuse.
- Educate parents, young people and other caregivers about taking medications as directed.
- Ask patients direct questions about any Rx or OTC medicine use or abuse.
- Provide your medical expertise as part of a local anti-drug coalition.

Role of the Retailer

- Be a diligent observer in your store.
- Educate your employees and customers about Rx and OTC abuse.
- Work with loss prevention experts to identify in-store problems and address them.
- Partner with a local anti-drug coalition.

(*Sample of Rx handout included in packet for each sale or at counter)

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Talking Points for Parents

The materials contained on the enclosed CD, recommended websites and samples in this packet are for your use. The Partnership for a Drug Free America materials are free and explain all aspects of prevention and education for teens on the dangers of prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse.

These materials could be provided at parent workshops, conferences, open houses, or in a parent newsletter. The information is that important. Why? Because everyday in American 2,500 youth ages 12 to 17 abuse a pain reliever for the very first time. Where do they get the prescription drugs? Over 70% obtained them from a relative or friend.

Why should parents be concerned?

- More teens abuse Rx drugs than any other illicit drug, except marijuana.
- Rx and OTC drugs are easily accessible.
- Many teens believe it is safe to abuse Rx and OTC drugs.
- Abuse of Rx drugs can be dangerous, even fatal.
- Teens often sell their medications to others.

According to the Minnesota Student Survey, 10% of 12th grade students in Dakota County used their own or someone else's ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) or ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) drugs to get high. These medications include: Ritalin, Adderall, Dexedrine and Strattera.

Download handout called: ***Parents: The Anti-Drug "What Can You Do? Tips for Preventing Rx Abuse.***

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Talk to your teen about the dangers of abusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs. These are powerful drugs that, when abused, can be just as dangerous as street drugs. Be sure your teen knows the risks far outweigh any "benefits".

Talking Points for Senior Citizens

Senior Citizens Can Help Prevent Teen Prescription Drug Abuse

According to AARP, three-fourths of people age 45 or older take an average of four prescription medications daily. You care about your grandchildren and their friends. You know them as well as anyone. That's why you should be aware that prescription drugs (pain relievers, depressants, stimulants) abuse is on the rise. These types of medications are often found in your home.

Research indicates that 70% of young people ages 12 to 17 who abuse pain relievers say they got them from a relative or friend.

How can you prevent Rx drug abuse in your home?

- Safeguard all drugs and medications. Don't leave pills unattended.
- Monitor quantities and control access to the bottles.
- Discuss clear rules for teens about all drug use. This includes not sharing medications and following a doctor's advice on dosages.
- Be a good role model and follow the same rules with your own medications.
- Don't take medications in front of children.
- Don't call medications "candy".
- Try not to involve children as "helpers" with your medications. They should not have to remind you to take meds or bring you water.
- Properly dispose of old or unused medicines.
- Ask family members and friends to safeguard their prescription drugs.

You can keep your grandchildren and their friends safe and drug-free!

For more information, contact (insert local name, phone).

Resources available at www.drugfree.org.

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Talking Points for Young People

Everyday in America 2,500 youth ages 12 to 17 abuse a pain reliever or other prescription medications for the very first time. Prescription and over-the-counter medications are powerful drugs that, when abused, can be just as dangerous as street drugs. Be sure your teen knows the risks far outweigh any “benefits” and it is illegal to use a prescription that is not written for *you*!

What are they?

Prescription drugs are medicines that are prescribed to a patient by a doctor to manage pain, treat or cure a health condition such as pain, mental disease, diabetes, cancer, or common infections. These drugs are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and are shown to have medical benefits when prescribed and taken as directed by a doctor. For people who are suffering, these drugs allow them to control their symptoms, cure or treat their diseases, control pain, or fight an infection.

These medicines **are only safe when taken exactly as directed** by a doctor, healthcare provider, or as indicated on the packaging. This includes following directions on dosages, how often to take these drugs, whether to take them with or without food, and never taking any drug that is not prescribed for you.

Why teens abuse medicines?

- Young people believe that using a prescription is not as dangerous as using “street drugs”.
- Prescription medicines are easy to find. They can be found in medicine cabinets at home or at a friend’s house, or obtained over the internet.

Did you know it's illegal?

Getting prescription drugs without a prescription, called "diversion", is illegal and may put you at risk for arrest and prosecution. It doesn't matter how you acquire a prescription medication, using these types of drugs without a valid prescription — **written for you** — is unsafe and illegal.

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Safe Disposal

Visit the FDA's website www.fda.gov for instructions on safe disposal of unused or expired medications.

Do not flush prescription drugs down the toilet or drain unless the label or instructions specifically say it is safe to do so.

To properly dispose of prescription drugs not labeled to be flushed, you may be able to take advantage of community drug take-back programs or such programs as household hazardous waste collection events that collect drugs for proper disposal. Call your city or county's hazardous waste department or your local trash and recycling service and ask if a drug take-back program is available in your community.

If a drug take-back or collection program **is not available:**

1. **Take it out** - take your prescription drugs out of the original container and destroy the label.
2. **Mix it up** - mix prescription drugs no longer needed with an undesirable substance such as coffee grounds, cat litter or egg shells (so no one is tempted to pull them out of the trash).
3. **Hide it** - put the mixture into a disposable container such as an empty margarine tub or a sealable bag.
4. **Trash it** - place the sealed container in the trash.

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Signs & Symptoms

With 2,500 youth each day in America ages 12 to 17 abusing a pain reliever or other prescription medications for the very first time, how can you be sure your teen isn't one of them? Over 70% of youth obtained these medications from a relative or friend. The bottom line is clear: Abusing prescription drugs can have serious consequences and ruin promising lives!

What signs or symptoms should you watch for?

Pain reliever abuse (Vicadin, Percocet, Oxycontin, Tylenol with Codeine):

- Constricted pupils
- Nausea and vomiting
- Respiratory depression

Stimulant abuse (Adderall, Dexedrine, Ritalin):

- Anxiety and delusions
- Flushed skin
- Chest pain with heart palpitations

Depressant abuse (sleeping pills, anti-anxiety drugs, Valium, Xanax):

- Slurred speech
- Dizziness
- Respiratory depression

For more information on prescription drug abuse, visit

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or call 1-800-788-2800

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Resources

The Partnership for a Drug Free America

www.DrugFree.org

Minnesota www.mn.drugfree.org

www.TheAntiDrug.com

Or call 1-800-788-2800

Above the Influence

www.AboveTheInfluence.com

D.A.R.E. America

Drug Abuse Resistance Education

www.dare.org

Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)

www.dea.gov

JVP-Just One!

www.jvp1.com/facts AND

AWARxE - Get Informed!

www.AwareRx.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

www.nida.nih.gov

Office of National Drug Control Policy

www.WhiteHouseDrugPolicy.gov

1-202-395-6618

Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Services Administration (SAMHSA)

www.samhsa.gov

Stop Medicine Abuse

www.StopMedicineAbuse.org

Treatment Referral

www.FindTreatment.samhsa.gov

1-800-662-HELP

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Acknowledgment

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Maryan Saad, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

**And the many great resources from
The Partnership for a Drug Free America
www.DrugFree.org**

If you have questions or would like more information, contact Monica Jensen by phone at 651-438-4440 or email monica.jensen@co.dakota.mn.us

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