



EMPOWERING PARENTS TO RAISE  
THEIR CHILDREN TO BE SUBSTANCE-FREE

*Talk Early And Often About Alcohol, Tobacco And Other Drugs. Even When It Gets Tough*

## Know! The Facts, Respect The Meds

*October is National Medicine Abuse Awareness month; bringing to light the dangers of prescription (and over-the-counter) medicine abuse and encouraging parents and other caregivers to be a part of the solution.*

**Did you KNOW! teen medicine abuse is on the rise?** According to the Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS), there was a 33% increase in American teens abusing prescription drugs over a five-year period. Prescription meds now rank in the top three most popular drugs of choice among youth, just after marijuana and alcohol. Statistics reveal that ONE in FOUR teens have misused or abused prescription drugs.

**What exactly is prescription drug abuse?** Anytime a person takes a medication prescribed for someone else, or takes his/her own prescription for reasons not intended by his/her physician – like getting high.

**What drugs are teens abusing?** The most common drugs of abuse are OPIOIDS (painkillers), DEPRESSANTS (to relieve anxiety or induce sleep) and STIMULANTS (especially those used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder - ADHD).

**Where are teens getting such drugs?** The majority of youth obtain prescription meds from the home medicine cabinets of family and friends - many times without them even knowing.

**Why are young people abusing prescription drugs?** Teens abuse prescription drugs for a number of reasons. They may use not only to get high, but to stay alert, go to sleep, lose weight, stop pain or as a study aid. Many teens and adults falsely believe prescription drugs are safer than illegal drugs; and many say they'd be in less trouble if caught using a prescription drug vs. an illicit "street" drug – both of which contribute to teen use.

**Why should you be concerned?** Regardless of why young people choose to abuse prescription drugs, their developing bodies and minds are negatively impacted (in addition to the legal, social, educational and personal ramifications it can cause). Depending on the drug and what it is mixed with, physical side-effects may include anything from chest pains and decreased breathing to seizures and loss of consciousness – which can ultimately lead to death. Prescription drugs also change a person's brain chemistry, potentially leading to addiction and interfering with the brain's neurotransmitters which can impact everything from basic survival functions, like breathing, to more complex functions, like the ability to think, solve problems and make decisions.

**Respect the meds!** Prescription medications have many beneficial effects. When used under proper medical supervision, they can help us live longer, healthier lives. But these same medications have the potential to produce dangerous and even deadly side-effects, especially when misused or abused. Because of this potential for harm, prescription medications should be used precisely as prescribed, and only by the person for which they are intended.

For more information and resources on preventing the misuse and abuse of prescription medications, please visit [cardinalhealth.com/GenerationRx](http://cardinalhealth.com/GenerationRx).

**Stay tuned for the next Know! Tip, as we share information and guidance on what you can do to be a part of the solution to prevent prescription drug abuse among your children and your community.**

*Sources: Cardinal Health: Generation Rx, The Brain's Response to Prescription Drug Abuse NIH Publication No. 09-742 (2009), Partnership for Drug-Free Kids; Partnerships Attitude Tracking Study (PATS).*

Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

Know! encourages you to share this Parent Tip with friends and family.

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