

CADY Corner

Prescriptions Used as Dangerous New Party Drugs

Prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications are fast becoming the new party drugs for many teenagers.

The new trend among youth is known as “pharming” - that is, kids' using prescription and OTC drugs for recreational use. Parents must put this on their radar screens - one in five teens have used powerful narcotic pain relievers for non-medical reasons.

Many parents are not aware that their own medicine cabinets are potential sources of these drugs for teenage abuse. Young people also purchase these drugs on-line.

We're NOT talking about kids mistakenly taking the wrong dose of legal medicines or taking a stronger-than-necessary medicine for an ailment. We are talking about drug abuse - kids using prescription and OTC drugs on purpose in order to get high. This practice is life threatening and a child or youth may die with first time use.

Did You Know?

- *4.5 million American kids have reported that they've abused prescription drugs.*
- *2.1 million American kids have intentionally abused cough syrup. Every day 2,700 teens try a prescription medicine to get high for the first time.*
- *Half of teens do not see a great risk in abusing prescription (Rx) or over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. Teens believe that abuse of Rx and OTC medicines is safer than street drugs. Such drugs are easily accessible via medicine cabinets, purses, and the internet.*
- *Over half of teens agree prescription drugs are easier to get than illegal drugs.*
- *1 in 3 teens report having a close friend who abuses Rx pain relievers to get high.*
- *1 in 4 teens report having a close friend who abuses cough medicines to get high.*
- *Only 31% of teens learn a lot about the risk of drugs from their parents.*
- *Emergency room visits due to abuse of prescription drugs are more than the number of visits due to marijuana and heroin combined.*

What Can You Do?

It's up to you to educate yourself about the real dangers of prescription and OTC drug abuse and to discuss these risks with your teen. Kids need to hear from parents that getting high on legal prescription and OTC drugs is just as dangerous as getting high on illegal street drugs. Research shows that kids who learn about drug risks from their parents are half as likely to use drugs as kids who haven't had that conversation with Mom and Dad.

Tips for Communicating With Your Teen

- ***Set An Example*** - *Use drugs as the doctor intended. Don't medicate today's headache or sore muscles with a prescription drug medication your doctor gave you after last year's*

surgery. Use OTC medicines according to packaged instructions or your doctor's recommendations.

- **Connect With Your Kids** - *Stay involved with your kids' lives as they go through middle school and into high school. Use part of your daily conversation to talk honestly about prescription and OTC drug abuse. Know the facts – clear up wrong information, but don't make it all a lecture. Listen to your children's questions and comments about their drug topics of concern.*
- **Stop the Myth** - *Getting high with prescription and OTC medication is NOT safer than getting high with illicit street drugs.*
- **Help Your Child Make Good Decisions** - *Your child is more likely to be offered drugs by a friend than a stranger, and exposure to drugs can begin as early as age 12. Give your child the ammunition to make clear to his or her acquaintances that the consequences from abusing these drugs are too severe to risk it. Remind your child that a real friend won't care if he or she makes the right choice and decides not to abuse these medications.*
- **Take Action** - *Inventory your medicine cabinets, kitchen cabinets, bureau tops or anywhere you may store medicines. If necessary, monitor the pill quantities and medicine levels in your prescription and OTC drug containers. Put drugs away out of sight. If you currently need medication, put it in a place where you can get them easily but where your child is unlikely to look. If drugs in your house are left over from a previous condition, dispose of them as soon as possible in a safe and effective way.*

A survey of teenagers by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America found that:

- *1 in 5 teens has tried Vicodin®, a powerful and addictive narcotic pain reliever*
 - *1 in 10 has tried OxyContin®, another prescription narcotic*
 - *1 in 10 has used the stimulants Ritalin® or Adderall® for nonmedical purposes*
 - *1 in 11 teens has admitted to getting high on cough medicine*
- Vicodin (generic name:hydrocodone), manufactured by Abbott. OxyContin (generic name:oxycodone), manufactured by Perdue Pharma LP. Ritalin (generic name:methylphenidate), manufactured by Ciba-Geigy Corp. Adderall (generic name:mixed amphetamine salts), manufactured by Shire US.*

You DO have the power to influence your child's decision about whether or not to use prescription and OTC drugs for recreation. Research says that fear of upsetting parents is the number one reason why kids do not use drugs.

More information is available from the following national organizations: Partnership for a Drug-Free America, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, National Institute on Drug Abuse. Locally, contact CADY at 536-9793 or visit us on line at www.cadyinc.org.

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