

## Alarming statistics:

**1 in 6**

...teens has abused a pain reliever such as OxyContin or Vicodin.



**1 in 8**

...teens has abused the stimulants Ritalin or Adderall for nonmedical purposes.



**1 in 8**

...teens has reported getting high on over-the-counter cough medicine.



*A survey of teen drug use conducted by the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids found that one in four teens has taken a prescription medicine not prescribed for them at least once – up from 18 percent in 2008. That translates to about 5 million teens and an increase of 33 percent over a five-year period.*

## Teen prescription drug abuse:

# A national problem ...in every hometown

Almost half of teens (47 percent) say it's easy to get prescription drugs – everything from pain medicines to stimulants, sedatives and tranquilizers – from the medicine cabinet at home or at the homes of relatives and friends.

## So what do we do? In a word: **Talk.**

*Research shows that children who learn about the risks from their parents are at least 20 percent less likely to use drugs as kids who haven't had that conversation, according to Partnership for Drug-Free Kids. So start educating yourself about the dangers of prescription abuse and then talk to your kids about it.*



Compounding the problem of easy access is the misperception that prescription drugs are safer, less addictive and less risky than street drugs, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Such faulty thinking often clears the path to abuse, accidents and addiction. Prescription drug abuse is the use of doctor-prescribed medications for non-medical purposes, such as to get high or for recreation.

According to the New York State Department of Health, emergency room visits due to abuse of prescription drugs outnumber visits due to marijuana and heroin combined.

Drug use early in life is a strong predictor of worse problems ahead, including addiction. People who begin using addictive substances before age 15 are nearly seven times more likely to develop a substance abuse problem than those who delay first use until age 21 or older, according to The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. Nearly 50 percent of young people who inject heroin started out by abusing prescription drugs, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.



# Teen prescription drug abuse: A national problem

...in every hometown

Experts advise parents to practice what they preach, by using only medications that were prescribed for them by a doctor, and to keep a close watch on medicine cabinet inventory.

**The New York State Department of Health offers these tips for communicating with teens about prescription drug abuse:**

**So what do we do?**  
**In a word: *Talk.***



**45 million**

...American kids have reported they've abused prescription (Rx) drugs.

**2.1 million**

...American kids have intentionally abused cough syrup.

**2,500**

children ages 12-17 abuse a pain reliever for first time every day.

**2/3**

of teens who report abuse of prescription pain relievers are getting them from friends, family and acquaintances.

**50%**

of young people who inject heroin started out by abusing prescription drugs.

**27%**

of parents have taken an Rx drug without a prescription.

**1 in 3**

teens reports having a close friend who abuses Rx pain relievers to get high.

**74**

emergency room visits in a typical day for misuse of prescription or nonprescription pain relievers by youth ages 12 to 17.

**90%**

of the nearly 2 million adolescents who need help with drug and alcohol problems are not getting the help they need.

*Sources: National Institute on Drug Abuse; Partnership for Drug-Free Kids; New York State Department of Health; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association; 2008 National Study on Drugs and Health.*



## Additional Resources:

**Partnership for Drug Free America:**  
<http://www.drugfree.org/the-parent-toolkit/>

**New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS):**

**-The Kitchen Table Toolkit:**  
<http://combatheroin.ny.gov/kitchen-table-toolkit>

**-Talk2Prevent:**  
<http://talk2prevent.ny.gov/>

**National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens:**  
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/>

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association:**  
<http://www.samhsa.gov/prescription-drug-misuse-abuse>

**1) SET AN EXAMPLE:** Use prescription drugs as intended, and follow package instructions when using over-the-counter (OTC) medicines.

**2) CONNECT WITH YOUR KIDS:** Stay involved in your children's lives in middle and high school. Listen and be ready to answer their questions, but be sure to know your stuff.

**3) STOP THE MYTH:** Getting high with prescription and OTC medication is not safer than illicit street drugs. Help your children understand this reality before sending them out into the world, where they're more likely to be offered drugs by a friend than a stranger. Educate and empower them to make good choices and not be afraid to stand up for what they know is right.

**4) TAKE ACTION:** Inventory your medicine cabinets, kitchen cabinets, bureau tops or anywhere you might store medicines. It might even be necessary to monitor the pill quantities and medicine levels in your drug containers. Drugs left over from a previous condition, meanwhile, should be safely discarded.

