



## Prescription Drug Abuse-- The Invisible Epidemic



Prescription drug abuse is one of the fastest growing substance abuse problems among teens and young adults.

### Use vs. Abuse

Prescription drug abuse is taking a medication that is not prescribed for you, or taking it for reasons or in dosages other than prescribed. Some abuses are due to an addiction that began in response to a legitimate medical condition. Others are recreational use of medication without medical supervision with the intentional purpose of getting high.

### Perception Problem

Since they are not illegal, some people think abusing prescription drugs is safer than using illicit drugs. Nothing could be further from the truth: these drugs can be both addictive and harmful to one's health. Teens often reason that prescription drug abuse is not like taking street drugs. They believe there is less shame and fewer parental (and legal) consequences associated with using prescription drugs.

### As Close as Your Medicine Cabinet

In a recent survey, 70% of teens and adults who abuse prescription pain relievers say they got them from a friend or a relative, often without their knowledge. Others abuse their own prescription medicine or swap pills with friends.

In 2009, 16 million Americans age 12 and older had taken a prescription pain reliever, tranquilizer, stimulant or sedative for nonmedical purposes at least once in the prior year. A 2010 study found that 2.7% of 8th graders, 7.7% of 10th graders and 8.0% of 12th graders had abused Vicodin in the prior year. Oxycontin use for the same group and time period was 2.1%, 4.6%, and 5.1% respectively.



### Most Commonly Abused Drugs

#### Pain Killers (Opioids)

- Vicodin
- Tylenol with Codeine
- OxyContin
- Percocet
- Dilaudid
- Demerol

#### Depressants (used to treat anxiety & sleep disorders)

- Klonopin
- Nembutal
- Soma
- Valium
- Xanax

#### Stimulants (used to treat ADHD and weight loss)

- Adderall
- Concerta
- Dexedrine
- Ritalin

## Over-the-Counter Drug Dangers

Over-the-counter (OTC) medication such as certain cough suppressants, sleep aids, and antihistamines, can be abused for their psychoactive effects. This typically involves taking higher doses than recommended or combining OTC medications with alcohol or with illicit or prescription drugs. Either practice can have dangerous results, depending on the medications

involved. Cough syrups and cold medicine are the most commonly abused OTC medications. In a 2010 study, 6.6 % of high school seniors took cough syrup "to get high." At high doses, dextromethorphan-a key ingredient found in cough syrup-can act like PCP or ketamine, producing out of body experiences.

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## Caring Hearts/Helping Hands

News You Can Use to Change Your Community  
A Community Care Team Newsletter



CONLEY OUTREACH COMMUNITY SERVICES / COMMUNITY CARE TEAM

PO Box 931  
Elburn IL 60119  
630/365-2880  
conleyor@conleyoutreach.org



### Effects of Prescription Drug Abuse

Long term use of opioids or central nervous system depressants can lead to physical dependence and addiction. Opioids can produce drowsiness, constipation and depending on the amount taken, can depress breathing. Central nervous system depressants slow down brain function; if combined with other medications that cause drowsiness or with alcohol, heart rate and respiration can slow down dangerously. Taken repeatedly or in high doses, stimulants can cause anxiety, paranoia, dangerously high body temperatures, irregular heartbeat or seizures.



#### AREA RESOURCES for Substance Abuse

Gateway Foundation	877/321-7326
Breaking Free	630/897-1003
Ben Gordon Center	815/756-4875
Renz Addiction Center	630/513-6886
Linden Oaks	630/305-5500
TriCity Family Services/New Directions	630/232-1070

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## Safeguarding Your Prescriptions



Because prescription drug abusers often take pills without the owner's consent, it is important to safeguard and keep track of your prescription drugs. Think about your home. What prescription drugs do you have? Where are they kept? Would you notice if some were missing?

Limit other's access to your prescription drugs:

- Put medicine in a concealed, safe place.
- Monitor quantities and control access.

- If you have children, set clear rules about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider's advice and dosages.
- Be a good role model by following these same rules with your own medicines.
- Ask friends and family to safeguard their prescription drugs as well.
- Properly dispose of old or unused medicines. Contact your waste management company for proper disposal options.

**Did You Know?**  
**27% of all Emergency Room Drug Overdoses involve prescription medicine.**

### *Signs & Symptoms of Abuse:*

- Constricted pupils; slurred speech
- Personality changes, mood swings, irritability
- Excessive energy, avoiding sleep
- Sweating, flushed skin, loss of appetite
- Forgetfulness, sleepiness and clumsiness

### *Signs at Home:*

- Missing pills
- Unfamiliar pills
- Empty cough and cold medicine bottles or packages

### *If Your Teen Takes Prescription Medicine:*

- Keep control of the bottle
- Use a pill box with daily compartments to dispense medicine
- Be alert to your teen running out of pills quickly or losing pills