

Recognizing the Signs of Prescription Drug Abuse

Addiction can happen at any age, but it usually starts when a person is young. If your teen continues to use drugs despite harmful consequences, he or she may have become addicted.

If an adolescent starts behaving differently for no apparent reason—such as acting withdrawn, frequently tired or depressed, or hostile—it could be a sign he or she is developing a drug-related problem.

Parents and others may overlook such signs, believing them to be a normal part of puberty.

Other signs include:

- a change in peer group
- carelessness with grooming
- decline in academic performance
- missing classes or skipping school
- loss of interest in favorite activities
- trouble in school or with the law
- changes in eating or sleeping habits
- deteriorating relationships with family members and friends

Through scientific advances, we know more than ever before about how drugs work in the brain. We also know that addiction can be successfully treated to help young people stop abusing drugs and lead productive lives.

Intervening early when you first spot signs of drug use in your teen is critical; don't wait for your teen to become addicted before you seek help. However, if a teen is addicted, treatment is the next step.

It is best to seek out medical advice. If your family physician does not feel comfortable addressing the concern, ask help in finding another health-care professional.

Opioids, Prescription Drugs and the Overdose Epidemic

Talking to Your Teens



D.A.R.E. America

P.O. Box 512090
Los Angeles,
CA 90051-0090



(800) 223-DARE



dare.org

Resources

- National Institute of Health, NIH,
www.nih.gov
- National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIDA,
www.drugabuse.gov
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HHS,
www.hhs.gov
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMHSA,
www.samhsa.gov

FDA Safe Disposal of Unused Medications:

- www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm

Partnership for Drug Free Kids:

- drugfree.org

Getting Professional Help for Opioid Dependency

- SAMHSA National Helpline
1-800-662-HELP (4357)
or text **1-800-487-4889**
or findtreatment.samhsa.gov
- Suicide
Call 9-1-1, 1-800-SUICIDE
or **1-800-273-TALK**
(National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)

What Do Parents Need to Know?

Most parents have talked with their teen about illegal drugs and their harmful effects. However, a majority of teens report that their parents have not talked to them about misuse of prescription and Over-the-Counter drugs.

Did you know that legal prescription drugs may also be addicting? Eighty percent of heroin users report misusing prescription drugs.

The dangers of prescription drug misuse, including opioid pain medication, include dependency, slower brain activity, heart failure, seizures, slow respiration and even death.

More than 20% of teens report taking prescription medicine not prescribed to them by a doctor at least once. One in eight high school seniors report using opioids for non-medical reasons.

Teens report that the easiest way to obtain prescription medicine is from their friends or their parents' medicine cabinet.

Parents make a difference. When children continue to learn about the risks associated with drug use and about safe practices, they are 50% less likely to misuse or use drugs. Talking to your children makes a difference.

The bottom line is ...

Parents are the biggest influence in a teen's life when it comes to safe and responsible decisions about the use of prescription drugs.

How and What to Say

Talking with teens can be challenging.

Here are some steps, you may already be using but are worth repeating.

1. **Choose a good time and place.**
2. **Be open to what your teen has to say.**
 - a. Keep an open mind.
 - b. Ask open-ended questions
 - c. Actively listen
 - d. Use I statements
3. **Understand your influence as a parent.**
 - a. Discuss negative effects of misuse of OTC/Rx, especially on developing brain
 - b. Share the information on how opioids affect the brain and body
 - c. Talk through how he/she may respond to a situation or scenario.
4. **Offer empathy and support**

According to SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration), here are some ways you can help prevent Rx misuse:

- Speak to your teen about prescription medicines – do not assume that illegal drugs are the only threat. Remind them that taking someone's else prescription or sharing their's with others is harmful and illegal.
- Encourage your teen to ask you or a doctor about the negative side effects of prescription medicines, how to watch for them, and what to do they suspect a negative effect.
- Alert your family physician if you are concerned and ask them to speak to your teen about the importance of proper use of prescription medicines. This is particularly important if your teen has any mental health disorder, such as depression.
- Keep track of and properly store all medications. Properly dispose of unused prescription medications, promptly.