



Prescription Drug Abuse by Teens on the Rise

Teens Report Easy Access and Perception of Decreased Harm

Across the State, communities are seeing a drastic increase in the abuse of prescription drugs by teenagers. Among 12th graders, abuse of OxyContin increased 30 percent from 2002-2007, and nearly 1 in 10 seniors reported taking Vicodin in the past year without a doctor's approval. When taken for non-medical purposes or other than prescribed by a doctor **the risk of dependence, overdose, and death increase.**

Most Common Prescription Drugs Abused by Youth

Prescription Painkillers (opioids) - used in treatment of pain often after surgery. Some of the more common prescription painkillers are oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), and meperidine (Demerol).

Prescription Depressants - used in the treatment of anxiety and sleep disorders, slows brain functioning, and in high doses become general anesthetics. The most common are tranquilizers (benzodiazepines such as Valium and Xanax), and barbiturates (Amytal, Nembutal, Seconal, Phenobarbital).

Prescription Stimulants - used in the treatment of Narcolepsy, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and sometimes depression. Stimulants increase alertness, attention, and energy, accompanied by an increase in blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration. Most common stimulants include amphetamines (Biphphetamine, Adderall, Dexedrine) and methyphenidate (Ritalin, Concerta).

All prescription drugs used in combination with alcohol drastically increase risk of overdose and death!

Prescription Drugs Are Readily Available

Teens report obtaining prescription drugs by:

- Stealing them from friends or family.
- Purchasing them for no or low cost from friends or family.

Distorted Perception of Risk

Teens report using prescription drugs for the following reasons:

- They are not illegal
- There is 'less shame' involved in using prescription drugs
- There is the belief that parents don't care as much if they get caught.
- **Teens incorrectly believe prescription drugs are much safer to use than illicit drugs, with fewer side-effects and a decreased chance of becoming addicted.**

Due to the ease of access and distorted perception of decreased risk, teens who typically would not consider using illicit drugs may use prescription drugs.

Signs of Misuse and Abuse

- Taking more than what is prescribed.
- Repeatedly "losing" medication or not being able to explain why they ran out.
- Taking medication for reasons other than specified.
- Pills in the bottle do not match the labeling.
- Medication found in unlabeled containers.
- Possessing medications that do not belong to the individual.

