



When teens want to get high

# YOUR PRESCRIPTION IS AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP.

TEENS ARE ABUSING PRESCRIPTION  
DRUGS THEY FIND AT HOME. HERE'S  
WHAT THEY ARE DOING—AND HOW  
PARENTS CAN STOP IT.

It can be medication left over from your last surgery. Maybe they're the pills you keep on the dresser or tucked inside your purse. Teens are finding prescription drugs wherever people they know keep them—and abusing them to get high. In fact, 70 percent of persons age 12 and older who abuse prescription painkillers say they get them from a relative or friend<sup>1</sup>—leading to several troubling trends:

- **Every day, 2500 kids age 12 to 17 try a painkiller for the first time.**<sup>2</sup>
- **Prescription drugs are the drugs of choice for 12 and 13 year olds.**<sup>3</sup>
- **Teens abuse prescription drugs more than any illicit street drug except marijuana.**<sup>4</sup>

What's also disturbing is they don't realize these drugs can be as dangerous as street drugs. So kids who would never try street drugs might feel safe abusing prescription drugs. Misperceptions about prescription drug abuse have serious consequences. In fact, drug treatment admissions for prescription painkillers increased more than 300 percent from 1995 to 2005.<sup>5</sup> Now that you know prescription drug abuse is a problem, here are ways parents can keep it from affecting their kids' lives:

- **Safeguard** all drugs at home. Monitor quantities and control access.
- **Set clear rules** for teens 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 the same rules with your own medicines.
- **Properly conceal and dispose** of old or unused medicines in the trash.
- **Ask friends and family** to safeguard their prescription drugs as well.

Following these steps is a start. Let your teen know where you stand.

When you talk about drugs and alcohol, include prescription drugs in the conversation.

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- *American Academy of Family Physicians*
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- *American Medical Association*
- *American Pharmacists Association*
- *American Society of Addiction Medicine*
- *National Association of School Nurses*
- *Partnership for a Drug-Free America*

1. 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA, September 2007.  
2. Ibid.  
3. Ibid.  
4. Ibid.  
5. 2005 Treatment Episode Data Set, SAMHSA, 2007.