PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR PARENTS

As a parent, teach your teen to:

- **Respect** the power of medicine and use it properly.
- **Recognize** that all medicines, including prescription medications, have **risks** along with benefits. The risks tend to increase dramatically when medicines are abused.
- Take **responsibility** for learning how to take prescription medicines safely and appropriately, and seek help at the first sign of a problem for their own or a friend's abuse.

Here are some ways you can help:

- Speak to your teen about prescription medicines – do not presume that illegal drugs are the only threat, and remind them that taking someone else's prescription or sharing theirs with others is illegal.
- Encourage your teen to ask you or a doctor about the negative side effects of a prescribed medicine, how to watch for them, and what to do if a negative effect is suspected.
- Alert your family physician that you are concerned, and ask him or her to speak to your teen about the importance of proper use of prescription medicines.
- Keep prescription medicines in a safe place and avoid stockpiling them.
- Promptly and properly dispose of any unused prescription medicines.
- Provide a safe and open environment for your teen to talk about abuse issues.
- Monitor your teen's use of the Internet, especially for any illegal online purchases.

Please remember that prescription medicines, when used correctly and under a doctor's supervision, are usually safe and effective.

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RESOURCES

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) National Helpline:
800-662-HELP (800-662-4357)
(Toll-Free) (English and Spanish)
800-487-4889 (TDD) (Toll-Free)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Locator:
http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment

SAMHSA's website:
http://www.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA's ***Recovery Month*** website:
http://www.recoverymonth.gov

To order SAMHSA publications:
http://store.samhsa.gov

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) for Teens:
301-443-1124
http://www.teens.drugabuse.gov

NIDA for Parents and Teachers:
http://www.drugabuse.gov/parent-teacher.html

FDA Safe Disposal of Unused Medication:
http://www.fda.gov/drugs/resourcesforyou/consumers/buyingusingmedicinesafely/ensuringsafeuseofmedicine/safedisposalofmedicines/ucm186187.htm

National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE):
301-340-3940
http://www.talkaboutrx.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SAMHSA
www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

The statistics in this brochure are from SAMHSA's Drug Abuse Warning Network, 2009: National Estimates of Drug-Related Emergency Department Visits, and the Partnership at Drugfree.org's 2010 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study: Teens and Parents.

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TALKING TO YOUR KIDS

about prescription drug abuse

Not Worth The Risk
even if it's legal

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
www.samhsa.gov

WHAT DO PARENTS NEED TO KNOW?

As a parent of a teenager, you may have spoken to your child about illegal drugs and their harmful effects. But did you know that legally prescribed medicines are also a cause of concern?

An alarming number of teenagers are more likely to have abused prescription and over-the-counter drugs than some illegal drugs, like ecstasy, cocaine, crack, and methamphetamines.

The dangers of prescription medicine abuse include dependence, slower brain activity, irregular heartbeats, dangerously high body temperature, heart failure, or lethal seizures. Prescription drug abuse also increases emergency room visits and suicide attempts. In 2009, more than 1 million emergency room visits involved the nonmedical use of prescription drugs.

The easiest way for teens to obtain prescription medicines is from their friends or their parents' medicine cabinet. It's so common that it could happen even in your house!

- Nearly one in four teens (23 percent) report taking a prescription drug not prescribed to them by a doctor at least once in their lives.
- Almost half of teens (47 percent) say it is easy to get prescription drugs from a parent's medicine cabinet.
- Teens are abusing everything from pain medicines to stimulants, sedatives, and tranquilizers.

Parents can make a difference. Kids who continue to learn about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs than those who are not taught about the dangers. Only 22 percent of teens report discussing the risks of abusing any prescription drug without a doctor's prescription with their parents. **It's up to YOU to talk openly with your kids!**

UNDERSTANDING "GENERATION RX"

What causes today's teens to abuse prescription drugs to get high? Among the factors are a series of misconceptions, lack of information, and a carefree attitude toward the risks involved in using prescription medicines improperly.

Why do kids abuse prescription drugs?

- They are seeking psychological or physical pleasure.
- They want to fit in with groups of friends and are in search of acceptance and bonding.
- They do not realize the risks of taking medicines that have not been prescribed specifically for them or the danger of not following a prescription's directions.
- It is easier to get prescription drugs than illegal drugs.

Teens may believe the following misconceptions such as:

- Prescription medicines are much safer to use than illegal drugs.
- Prescription pain relievers cannot be addictive.
- There is nothing wrong with using prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription.

*As a parent, **YOU** need to explain to your teen the dangers of prescription drug abuse.*

RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

The best way to prevent prescription drug abuse is to first educate yourself. That way, you can accurately and adequately present the facts when you talk with your teen.

Be sure you can recognize the signs of prescription drug abuse:

- Fatigue, red or glazed eyes, and repeated health complaints
- Sudden mood changes, including irritability, negative attitude, personality changes, and general lack of interest in hobbies/activities
- Secretiveness and withdrawing from family
- Decreased or obsessive interest in school work
- Missing prescription medicines from your medicine cabinet
- Additional filled prescriptions on your pharmacy record that you did not order

Some of these warning signs might signal other problems as well. If you recognize any of these signs, refer to the resources provided in this brochure, or contact your teen's physician or other healthcare professional.