

# Parents Prevent: Focus on Prescription Drugs

## ERASE

East of the River Action for Substance Abuse Elimination, Inc.

### Prescription Drug Abuse: What you should know:

4 out of 10 teens think that prescription medicines are much safer to abuse than illicit drugs, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor (PATS, 2006) Yet there has been a substantial increase in the number of poisonings and deaths associated with prescription drug use. Every day, 2,500 youth ages 12-17 abuse a prescription pain reliever for the very first time.



The most disturbing fact is that many teens are getting these drugs from their family medicine cabinet. According to a SAMHSA study (2007), 70% of prescription drug abusers over age 12 reported getting their drugs mainly from relatives and friends, often without their knowledge. 40% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students surveyed agreed that painkillers were easy to obtain and over half agreed that stimulants were easy to obtain. More reports have come out about teenagers buying prescription drugs over the internet.

What prescription drugs are being used? Pain relievers like Vicodin and

Oxycontin are the prescription drugs that are most commonly abused by teens (NSDUH, 2007). Oxycontin use among high school seniors has risen by 30% since 2002. 1 in 10 seniors reported using Vicodin not prescribed for them in the past year.

Only 36% of parents report discussing the risks of prescription drugs “a lot” with their children (PATS,2007). The key is to talk to your child about the dangers of prescription drug use and to take precautions with your own medicine cabinet (see page 2 in this newsletter for more tips).



### Pain Killers: Signs and Symptoms to Look For

Short-term effects of using pain killers can include drowsiness, inability to concentrate, apathy, lack of energy, constriction of the pupils, flushing of the face and neck, constipation, nausea, vomiting and respiratory depression.

When prescription drugs are abused for a period of time, long-term effects can

include addiction to the drug, where users will experience withdrawal symptoms (restlessness, muscle pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, cold flashes) when he or she stops taking the drug.

A tolerance can build with any addiction, meaning that the abuser will need more of the drug to produce the same high. This can lead

to an overdose, which is sometimes fatal. Physical signs of painkiller overdose include pinpoint pupils, cold and clammy skin, confusion, convulsions, severe drowsiness, and slow or troubled breathing.

Information obtained from: [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)

### NATIONAL TRENDS: Prescription Drug Abuse:

3% of teens (12-17) reported current abuse of prescription drugs in 2006, following only marijuana (7%) and well ahead of cocaine (0.4%), ecstasy (0.3%), meth (0.2%), and heroin (0.1%).

-NSDUH, 2007

Among teens who have abused painkillers, nearly one-fifth (18%) used them at least weekly in the past year.

-Wu, Pilowsky & Patkar, 2007

Prescription drugs are the drug of choice among 12- to 13-year-olds.

-NSDUH, 2007

### LOCAL DATA: Prescription Drug Abuse

9% of students in grades 7-12 reported abusing prescription drugs at least once in their lifetime.

16% of high school seniors reported abusing prescription drugs at least once in their lifetime.

6% of high school seniors reported abusing prescription drugs at least once in the past month.

\*Statistics from ERASE Student Surveys 2005-06

**60% of teens (ages 12-17) who have abused prescription painkillers first tried them before age 15. -Wu, Pilowsky & Patkar, 2007**

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

### Ellington Drug Abuse Prevention Council (DAPC)

The Ellington DAPC has been coordinating substance abuse prevention initiatives for the youth of Ellington for more than 10 years. The DAPC received grant funding from the state to target underage drinking prevention in Ellington.



The Parent Connection is a new subgroup of the DAPC, connects concerned parents interested in bringing awareness to the community at large, especially other parents of the dangers to our youth.

#### Interested? Contact:

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## WHAT CAN YOU DO?: TIPS FOR PREVENTING RX ABUSE

**Safeguard your drugs:** Take note of how many pills are in a bottle and keep track of refills. This goes for your own medication, as well as for your teen. If you find you have to refill medication more often than expected, there could be a real problem—someone may be taking your medication without your knowledge. If your teen has been prescribed a drug, be sure you control and monitor dosages and refills.

**Set clear rules for your teen:** Make sure your teen uses prescription drugs only as directed by a medical provider. This includes taking the proper dosage and not using with other substances without a medical provider's approval. Teens should never take prescription drugs with street drugs or alcohol. If you have any questions about how to take a drug, call your family physician or pharmacist.

**Be a good role model, by following your own rules:** Examine your own behavior to ensure you set a good example. If you misuse your prescription drugs, such as share them with your kids, or abuse them, your teen will take notice. Avoid sharing your drugs and always follow your medical provider's instructions.

**Properly dispose old medications:** Unused prescription drugs should be hidden and thrown away in the trash. So that teens or others don't take them out of the trash, you can mix them with an undesirable substance (like used coffee grounds or kitty litter) and put the mixture in an empty can or bag. Unless the directions say otherwise, do NOT flush medications down the drain or toilet because the chemicals can pollute the water supply. Also, remove any personal, identifiable information from prescription bottles or pill packages before you throw them away.

**Ask friends and family to safeguard their meds:** Make sure your friends and relatives, especially grandparents, know about the risks, too, and encourage them to regularly monitor their own medicine cabinets. If there are other households your teen has access to, talk to those families as well about the importance of safeguarding medications. If you don't know the parents of your child's friends, then make an effort to get to know them, and get on the same page about rules and expectations for use of all drugs, including alcohol and illicit drugs.

\*This article was obtained from: [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com).

**More than 3 in 5 teens say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from parents' medicine cabinets.**

-PATS, 2006



## ONLINE RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS:

**Connecticut Clearinghouse:** [www.ctclearinghouse.org](http://www.ctclearinghouse.org) CT's library and resource center for information on substance use and mental health disorders

**Parents: The Anti-Drug:** [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com) Learn the facts about drug and alcohol abuse, learn tips on how to communicate with your children, and read advice from parents who have dealt with their own teen's drug and alcohol issues.

**National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA):** <http://www.nida.nih.gov/parent-teacher.html> This site is designed to educate teachers and parents on the trends in drug and alcohol use and their consequences.

This issue of Parents Prevent Newsletter was made possible by Ellington's Drug Abuse Prevention Council (DAPC) and ERASE, your Regional Action Council.

For more information about ERASE, please visit [www.ctprevention.org/erase](http://www.ctprevention.org/erase).