

Keeping Medications Secure

Help Prevent Over-the-Counter (OTC) & Prescription Drug Abuse



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Prescription Drug Abuse on the Rise

While illegal drug use has diminished nationwide in recent years, prescription drug abuse among teens has been growing at a staggering rate:

- 48% of all emergency room visits for prescription drug abuse are by young people ages 12-20.
- 70% of children who abuse prescription drugs admit to getting them from family and friends.
- Many teens believe that prescription drugs are safer than “street drugs” like cocaine and heroin.



Commonly Abused OTC & Prescription Drugs

- Cold/Cough Medications (e.g., Sudafed[®], Robitussin-DM[®], Vicks[®])
- Depressants (e.g., Nembutal[®], Xanax[®], Valium[®])
- Stimulants (e.g., Adderal[®], Concerta[®], Ritalin[®])
- Painkillers (e.g., OxyContin[®], Percocet[®], Vicodin[®])

What You Can Do Talk to Your Teen

- Discuss the dangers of taking OTC and prescription drugs with the young people in your home. Let them know that drug abuse of any kind is not acceptable and can lead to addiction.
- Make sure they know you will be keeping an eye on the OTC and prescription drugs in your home and that you have asked family friends, grandparents and other relatives to do the same. Set clear consequences if rules are broken and stick to them.
- Be alert for possible signs of abuse and addiction:
 - ✓ Hyperactivity or sleeplessness (seen with stimulants)
 - ✓ Slowed movements or reaction time, slurred speech, or disorientation (seen with depressants or painkillers)
 - ✓ Sudden weight loss or weight gain
 - ✓ Excessive sleep
 - ✓ Unusual clothing choices (to hide injection sites)
 - ✓ Drug paraphernalia such as pipes, roach clips or syringes
 - ✓ Severe dental problems (especially with methamphetamine)



Know What Meds Are in Your Home

- Inventory the OTC and prescription medications in your home every six months, or more frequently if you suspect abuse.
- Dispose of meds that have expired or are left over from a previous illness or condition.



Lock Up Your Medications



- Keep all OTC and prescription medications in one location in your home.
- Store them in a combination safe, locked cabinet, or locked drawer—not your bathroom medicine cabinet. Childproof lock boxes are available at hardware store

Dispose of Medications Properly

1. Do NOT flush medications down the toilet or sink. This causes water pollution and affects drinking water and wildlife.
2. Keep meds in their original containers. Remove the label or use a permanent marker or duct tape to cover private information.
3. Make them less appealing. Mix prescription drugs with hot water to dissolve them and add an undesirable substance (e.g., used coffee grounds or kitty litter).
4. Contain, seal and dispose. Place meds inside a container, such as an empty margarine tub, tape it shut, and dispose of the container in your regular garbage can—NOT the recycling bin.
5. Ask about drug take-back programs at local pharmacies or recycling services. Visit the DCP PMP website at www.ct.gov/dcp to find one near you.

