

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT Rx DRUGS

A TIP SHEET FOR PARENTS

Think before you speak

Having conversations with your kids about prescription drugs is worth the effort. But it's good to prepare. Consider beforehand how you'll bring up the topic and what you'll say. The information below can help you.

The Basics

- Prescription drug misuse and abuse is when someone takes a medication inappropriately. That includes taking too much, taking someone else's medication, mixing it with another substance or taking it for a reason other than prescribed.
- The most commonly abused prescription drugs fall into three categories: opioids (pain relievers), stimulants (such as ADHD medications) and depressants (like sleep aids or anti-anxiety pills).
- Non-prescription (over-the-counter) drugs can also be abused.

The Facts

- Most teens get their prescription drugs from a family member or friend. They're either given them, they buy them or they steal them.
- While past-year misuse of any prescription drug among 12th graders has steadily and slowly dropped since 2015, Rx and OTC drugs are still the 4th most commonly misused substances by Americans age 14 and older (after marijuana, alcohol and tobacco).

FAQs

These are some common questions teens might ask about the subject and ideas for how to respond. Your kids want you to be genuine. So don't memorize the answers—just talk to them heart-to-heart. Remember, too, your teens may ask different questions. Think about your kids' own personalities and what they may wonder, and then use that to guide your conversation.

“Aren't prescription drugs safer than street drugs?”

Used properly, yes. But if they're not taken exactly as prescribed, they can be just as dangerous as—or even more dangerous than—any other substance. Even if a medication is prescribed to you by a doctor, there's still a chance you can become addicted. Over-the-counter drugs, which don't require a prescription, can also be very dangerous if they're not taken correctly.

“If they're so dangerous, why does the government allow them?”

Prescription medications help a lot of people. But because of the dangers, there are a lot of laws about how doctors prescribe drugs, and some manufacturers have even been sued by the government for how they market their drugs. The government also has a lot of initiatives to educate people about the risks and to stop illegal prescription drug sales.

*www.samhsa.gov, www.teens.drugabuse.gov