

Take Action to Address Medicine Abuse



It's up to all of us to take action against medicine abuse. The best place to start is in your own home by storing medications safely and securely, and by talking with your kids about the dangers of medicine abuse.

Mind Your Meds

Two-thirds of teens and young adults who report abuse of prescription medicine are getting it from friends, family and acquaintances. Make sure the young people in your life don't have access to any medications in your home. Follow these three steps to monitor, secure and properly dispose of unused and expired prescription and over-the-counter medicine in your home.

Step 1: Monitor

How aware are you of the prescription medications currently in your home? Would you know if some of your pills were missing? From this day forward, make sure you can honestly answer yes.

Start by taking note of how many pills are in each of your prescription bottles or pill packets, and keep track of refills. This goes for your own medicine, as well as for your kids and other members of the household. If you find you need to refill your medicine more often than expected, that could indicate a problem.

If your child has been prescribed medicine, be sure you control its use by monitoring dosages and refills. You need to be especially vigilant with medicine known to be addictive and commonly abused such as **opioids** (prescription pain relievers), **benzodiazepines** (sedatives and anti-anxiety medications) and **stimulants** (ADHD medications).

Make sure your friends, parents of your child's friends, neighbors and relatives — especially grandparents — are also aware of the risks. Encourage them to regularly monitor the medicine in their homes as well.

Step 2: Secure

Approach securing your prescriptions the same way you would other valuables in your home, like jewelry or cash. There's no shame in helping protect those items, and the same holds true for your medicine.

Remove prescriptions from the medicine cabinet and secure them in a place only you know about. If possible, keep all medicine, both prescription and over-the-counter, in a safe place, such as a locked cabinet your teen cannot access.

Step 3: Dispose

Safely disposing of expired or unused medicine is critical to helping protect your kids, family and home. And it decreases the opportunity for visitors in your home, like your kids' friends, to abuse medicine as well.

The ideal way to do this is by participating in a safe drug disposal program – either a drug take-back day, an ongoing program in your community, a drug deactivation bag, or a drug mail-back program. To find a take-back location or event near you, visit the [American Medicine Chest Challenge](#) or the [DEA website](#).

Download the Safe Drug Disposal Guide

Learn what safe drug disposal is, who should be involved in the development of a program, and ways to promote it to community members.



DOWNLOAD NOW

If none of these options are available to you, unused medicine can be disposed of at home as a last resort. Mix the medicine with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter, and discard. Unless the directions on the packaging say otherwise, do not flush medicine down the drain or toilet. To help prevent unauthorized refills, be sure to remove any personal, identifiable information from prescription bottles or pill packages before you throw them away.

Tips for Talking with Your Kids About Medicine Abuse

Kids who learn about the dangers of drug use early and often are much less likely to develop addiction than those who do not receive these critical messages at home.

According to a national study, only 14 percent of teens indicated that during the last conversation they had with their parents regarding substance use, the misuse or abuse of any type of prescription drug was discussed.¹ Be sure that when you discuss illicit drugs you're also including prescription drugs in the conversation.

Parents and other caregivers have an incredibly important role to play. We can all take action by having frequent conversations with the teens and young adults in our lives about the dangers of medicine abuse.

But we know these conversations are not always easy. In fact, they can be really challenging.

Take the following scenario for example:

You discover that your daughter has been taking a depressant not prescribed to her. When you ask her about it she says it's because she works herself into a breathtaking frenzy whenever she's stressed. Upon further questioning, she reveals the pills are from your medicine cabinet, and she calls you out for occasionally taking a pill or two from an old prescription to calm your own nerves.

What would you say? This is uncharted territory for most parents and caregivers.

While you don't have to tell your child every detail, be open with her. Admit that you have misused prescription medicine, that it was wrong and you regret it. And let her know that you don't want her making the same mistakes. It's important to emphasize that this is about her, not about you. Try to understand why she felt she needed the prescription medicine and how you can help her manage her stress in a healthier way, like listening to music, exercise or reaching out to a friend.

If she pushes the hypocrisy point, cite a bit of science. It takes about 25 years for the brain to fully develop. Explain that her brain is vulnerable to unhealthy influences like the abuse of Rx drugs and OTC cough medicine, street drugs and alcohol. If your daughter is feeling anxious and overly stressed, a consultation with a child and adolescent psychiatrist or qualified mental health professional may be helpful.

Learn More Conversation Tips in the Parent Talk Kit

Download our Parent Talk Kit to learn how to help end medicine abuse and how to keep the teenagers and young adults in your life healthy and drug-free.



GET YOUR FREE PARENT TALK KIT NOW

Get Help if a Loved One is Struggling

If your child or another loved one is struggling with misuse or abuse of prescription medicine, don't hesitate to act. Visit [Get Help & Support](#) for a wealth of information to understand & find treatment for your loved one. You can learn about how to [suggest treatment](#), as well as how to potentially [save a life](#) in the case of prescription opioid use.

For one-on-one help getting started, you can [contact our Parent Helpline via phone, chat or email](#) to speak with a caring, master's-level counselor who will listen and help you make an action plan.

Understanding the Opioid Epidemic & What You Can Do

Get all of our resources and information on protecting your community and helping a loved one together in our latest eBook.



GET THE EBOOK NOW

¹ PATS 2013

Next Steps

<p>Talk with Your Kids</p> <p>Take action by having frequent conversations with the teens and young adults in your life about the dangers of medicine abuse. Learn how.</p>	<p>Get Help for a Loved One</p> <p>Think your child might have a problem with prescription medicine abuse? We're to help. Learn what to do next.</p>	<p>Medicine Abuse Project: Parent & Community Resources</p> <p>Free downloads of guides, fact sheets and more to help parents and families prevent and address medicine abuse.</p>
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