



The Parent Connection

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Drug Free Workplaces of Tampa Bay



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Drug Free America Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization committed to developing, promoting and sustaining global strategies, policies and laws that will reduce illegal drug use, drug addiction, drug-related injury and death.



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The Lethal Truth About Your Medicine Cabinet:

Teens Are Using Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs to Get High

Across the U.S. teens are getting a new high. From family medicine cabinets or the drugstore, medicines designed to treat cold symptoms, provide pain relief or treat attention deficit disorder are being used to get high. This misuse involves prescription drugs such as opioids (Vicodin,[®] Oxy-Contin[®]), antidepressants (Valium,[®] Xanax[®]) and stimulants (Ritalin,[®] Adderall[®]). Among teens, pain medication is the most abused prescription medication. Teens are also getting high from common over-the-counter drugs, particularly cold medicines with dextromethorphan (DXM) as a main ingredient. This is sometimes referred to as “pharming” and “robotripping.”

What are some of the consequences of misusing prescription or over-the-counter drugs?

The consequences for prescription drug abuse include respiratory distress, cardiac stress and seizures (all of which can lead to death), tolerance (meaning that you have to take more of the drug to achieve the desired effect), dependence and serious withdrawal symptoms. Misuse of dextromethorphan (DXM) can cause nausea, vomiting, seizures, hallucinations and even death.

Could my teen be misusing prescription or OTC drugs?

Nearly one-third of all drug abuse in the U.S. involves non-medical misuse of prescription drugs. More worrisome, 13.4 percent of youth between the ages of 12 and 17 have misused prescription drugs at least once. To counter the growing problem of prescription drug misuse, parents are urged to learn the signs and symptoms of using these drugs, to talk to their kids about the dangers and to intervene if they see a problem.

Why are teens misusing prescription and OTC drugs?

Teens often point to personal or family-related stress as a major reason why they misuse prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Sources of stressful feelings for teens may include anxiety about friendships, romantic relationships and family life; worry about academic success, high school tests or college entrance exams; or trouble balancing homework, after-school jobs and extracurricular activities.

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Ask the Expert...

Question

My teen seems stressed all the time. Can stress lead to substance use?

Answer

The many pressures teens face can play a big part in influencing choices around risky behavior, especially substance use. In fact, most teens use alcohol or illicit drugs to fit in, to cope with an underlying problem, to feel stimulated or to address some combination of these. So your first step is to understand this and to keep a close eye on your teen. In addition, issues like depression, anxiety, substance use and other risk-taking might signal that your teen is struggling with the pressures of adolescence. Watch for these warning signs: sudden, dramatic change in behavior (sleeping/eating habits); frequent sadness or over-reactions; self-injury such as cutting or scratching; bloodshot eyes or confusion; extreme eating patterns or unhealthy obsession with weight, needing constant support and reassurance, problems with relationships and isolation. From www.theantidrug.com

Parent Tip # 6

Get to know your teen's friends.....
(and their parents) by inviting them over for dinner or talking with them at your teen's soccer practice, dance rehearsal or other activities.

Prescription Drugs, Cont.

What can I do to help my teen?

Research shows parents' attitudes about drug use directly affect their kids' decisions. Talk to your teens and set clear expectations. Let them know you don't want them to get high. Monitor their behavior for warning signs. Get to know their friends and their friends' families. Keep your prescription and other medications in a place where only you have access to them and ask your teen's grandparents to do the same.

This article is brought to you by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. For more information about prescription and over-the-counter drug misuse among teens and keeping your teen drug-free, visit www.TheAntiDrug.com, or www.MediaCampaign.org.

Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drinking and Drug Use

How can you tell if your child is using drugs or alcohol? It is difficult because changes in mood or attitudes, unusual temper outbursts, changes in sleeping habits and changes in hobbies or other interests are common in teens. What should you look for?

You can also look for signs of depression, withdrawal, carelessness with grooming or hostility. Also ask yourself, is your child doing well in school, getting along with friends, taking part in sports or other activities?

Watch List for Parents

- Changes in friends
- Negative changes in schoolwork, missing school, or declining grades
- Increased secrecy about possessions or activities
- Use of incense, room deodorant, or perfume to hide smoke or chemical odors
- Subtle changes in conversations with friends, e.g. more secretive, using "coded" language
- Change in clothing choices; new fascination with clothes that highlight drug use
- Increase in borrowing money
- Evidence of drug paraphernalia such as pipes, rolling papers, etc.
- Evidence of use of inhalant products such as hairspray, nail polish, correction fluid, common household products; rags and paper bags are sometimes used as accessories
- Bottles of eye drops, which may be used to mask bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils
- New use of mouthwash or breath mints to cover up the smell of alcohol
- Missing prescription drugs

These changes often signal that something harmful is going on—and often that involves alcohol or drugs. You may want to take your child to the doctor and ask him or her about screening your child for drugs and alcohol. This may involve the health professional asking your child a simple question, or it may involve a urine or blood drug screen. However, some of these signs also indicate there may be a deeper problem with depression, gang involvement, or suicide. Be on the watch for these signs so that you can spot trouble before it goes too far.

From www.theantidrug.com