

# What's in your medicine cabinet?

While overall drug abuse has decreased, prescription drug abuse is on the rise. Medications left over from a prior surgery or pills on a nightstand or inside a purse are common in many households.

**Teens are abusing prescription drugs found at home.**

## Know the facts...

Every day, 2,500 young people ages 12 to 17 try a painkiller for the first time. More than 2.1 million teens reported abusing prescription drugs in 2006. Seventy percent of teens 12 and older who abused prescription drugs obtained them from a relative or a friend.

Teens abuse prescription drugs more than any illicit street drug except marijuana – more than cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine combined. Prescription drugs are the drug of choice for 12- and 13-year-olds.

Prescription drugs are being increasingly abused in combination with alcohol or street drugs. Forty percent of teens believe the myth that prescription drugs are safer to abuse than “street drugs.” When polled, 27 percent of parents agreed.

Abusing prescription drugs has serious consequences.

## Physical Signs and Symptoms of Prescription Drug Abuse

- **Pain reliever abuse** – constricted pupils, nausea and vomiting, and respiratory depression
- **Stimulant abuse** – anxiety and delusions, flushed skin, and chest pain with heart palpitations
- **Depressant abuse** – slurred speech, dizziness, and respiratory depression



# The most commonly abused prescription drugs

## OxyContin or Vicodin

are painkillers and are highly addictive drugs that produce sensations of euphoria and pleasure, and lead to overdose when combined with alcohol or other drugs.

## Depressants like Valium or Xanax

are commonly abused by teens and produce feelings of calm and reduce anxiety. They are addictive and deadly when combined with alcohol, prescription pain medications, and some over-the-counter cold and allergy drugs.

## Stimulant medications like Ritalin and Adderall prescribed for Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)

are being abused by teens to “help study better” and are addictive, causing feelings of fear or paranoia.

## Over-the-counter drugs (OTC), such as cough medications containing dextromethorphan (DXM),

are abused by teens. Abuse of OTC cough medications and cold preparations causes blurred vision, impaired motor function, numbness, nausea/vomiting, increased heart rate, dizziness, coma and even death.

## Combining prescription drugs, OTCs and alcohol can cause respiratory failure and death.

## Tips for Parents

- Safeguard all drugs at home; monitor quantities and control access.
- Set clear rules for teens about ALL drug use, including not sharing medication and following the medical provider's advice and dosages.
- Be a good role model, following these same rules with your medication.
- Ask friends and family to safeguard their prescription drugs.
- Properly conceal and dispose of old or unused medications. For dates and locations of pharmaceutical waste collection sites located near you, visit [www.monroecounty.gov/hhw](http://www.monroecounty.gov/hhw).
- Talk to your teen about alcohol and drug abuse and the risks of abusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

To learn more or to schedule a presentation, contact NCADD-RA at (585) 719-3489.



**National Council  
on Alcoholism and Drug  
Dependence – Rochester Area**



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