

A Parent’s Guide to Prescription Drug Abuse

1. How common is prescription drug abuse?

Prescription drug abuse is a major problem in the United States. It is estimated that as many as 1 in 50 (2 percent) Americans are currently misusing their prescription drugs. As many as 1 in 6 Americans (16 percent) will misuse their prescription drugs at least once in their lifetime. In teenagers, estimates of prescription drug abuse in the past month are as high as 1 in 33 (3.3 percent) in 12 to 17-year olds, and 1 in 16 (6 percent) in 17 to 25-year olds.

2. What are commonly abused prescription drugs?

While there are a number of different types of medications that are abused, teens are most commonly abusing three classes of medications: opiate pain killers, sedatives/muscle relaxants, and stimulants to treat ADHD. Below is a chart of commonly abused prescription medications:

Generic Name	Brand Names	Class	Street Names
Hydrocodone	Vicodin, Norco	Opiate pain killer	Vikes
Oxycodone	Percocet, Oxycontin	Opiate pain killer	Oxy, Hillbilly heroin, Percs
Hydromorphone	Dilaudid	Opiate pain killer	D, Dillies, Footballs
Morphine	Roxanol	Opiate pain killer	Monkey, M
Fentanyl	Duragesic, Actiq	Opiate pain killer	Apache, China Girl, China White
Tramadol	Ultram	Opiate pain killer	Chill pills, Ultras
Oxymorphone	Opana	Opiate pain killer	Blues, O, Octagons
Codeine		Opiate pain killer	Captain, Cody
Phenergan with codeine	Codeine/Promethazine	Cough suppressant/Opiate pain killer	Purple drank, Lean, Sizzurp
Lorazepam	Ativan	Sedative	Silence, Tranks
Diazepam	Valium	Sedative	Vs, Tranks
Alprazolam	Xanax	Sedative	Xannies, Bars
Clonazepam	Klonopin	Sedative	Kpin,
Carisoprodol	Soma	Muscle Relaxant	Ds, Dance
Methamphetamine	Desoxyn	Stimulant	Meth, Ice, Crank, Tweak
Methylphenidate	Ritalin	Stimulant	Skippy, Vitamin R
Amphetamine	Adderall	Stimulant	Truck drivers, Uppers

The sedatives above are in the class called benzodiazepines, often shortened to “benzos”

For a complete list of drugs of abuse and their street names, please go to: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/commonly-abused-drugs-charts>.

3. How are teens getting prescription drugs?

There are multiple ways that teens are able to get prescriptions drugs. Most commonly, teens are looking in family medicine cabinets and taking pills from there. This can include unused or expired medications. There is also a street market for prescription drugs, so teens can buy pills on the streets. In some cases, pills are being sold by students in school to their classmates.

4. What are the signs that my child is misusing prescription drugs?

The prescription drugs that are commonly abused are psycho-active, meaning they have an effect on the brain. As such, look for erratic or unusual behavior to suggest your child may be misusing prescription drugs. Prescription opiates and sedatives cause an intoxicated state that can resemble alcohol intoxication, while prescription stimulants cause an elevated mood and sometimes agitated behavior. Additionally, the prescription drugs that are commonly abused are highly addictive. Look for unusual behaviors such as excessive focus on taking medications, stealing pills or money, or changes in school or athletic performance to suggest addiction.

5. What should I do if I think my child is misusing prescription drugs?

If at any point you feel that your child is acutely in danger, seek help at the nearest Emergency Department. Otherwise, you can make an appointment with his or her doctor to address your concerns. This can be extremely difficult, as people suffering from addiction often do not want to receive treatment. Be sure to let your child know that family and loved ones are there for support and to help. For a more in-depth discussion of what to do if you think your child might be misusing prescription drugs, please go to: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/treatment/what-to-do-if-your-teen-or-young-adult-has-problem-drugs>.

6. How can I safely dispose of unused prescription drugs?

Fortunately, there are many locations at which you can dispose of prescription drugs safely. They are listed here: http://www.chomp.org/app/files/public/6879/safe-medication-disposal-sites-in-monterey-county-2016_7-12-16.pdf.

If unable to get to one of these sites, crush up unused pills so they cannot be consumed and mix with an unpalatable substance such as coffee grounds or kitty litter, and place in a garbage can.

Prescription Drug abuse is a big problem for our youth. For more information and resources, please review the Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative Website: <http://www.chomp.org/prescribe-safe/>