

# » Prescription Drug Abuse among Youth Raises Concerns

---

**Thursday, September 1st, 2011**

With school starting this week or if its just around the corner, parents and teachers have an important role in protecting young people from abusing prescription drugs. More than 2.1 million teens abused prescription drugs in the United States in 2006.[1] The nonmedical use of prescription psychotherapeutic drugs by youth between the ages of 12 to 17 years was second to marijuana and first among 12 to 13 year olds.[2] Every day, an average of more than 2,500 adolescents, aged 12 to 17, misused a pain reliever for the first time. Almost 900 tried a stimulant for the first time on an average day.[3]

Factors influencing prescription drug abuse among youth

- Many adolescents view prescription drugs as safer than illicit drugs because a doctor prescribed them for “someone.” However, prescription drugs can be as harmful as illicit drugs when abused.
- Many adolescents have easy access to prescription drugs.
- Sixty-four percent of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years who abused pain relievers received them from a friend or relative.[4]
- Forty-six percent received them for free, and 10 percent reported having stolen the pain relievers.[5]

## PREVENTION

What can parents and other adults do to help prevent prescription drug abuse among youth?

- Prescription medications should be safely stored, secured, and out of reach from children to prevent unauthorized use of prescription medications and accidental ingestion.
- Pills should be counted regularly to determine any missing medications.
- Parents can address the perception that prescription drugs are safer than illicit drugs by having frequent, detailed discussions with their children on the risks associated with inappropriate use of prescription drugs.
- On a routine basis, clean out old prescription medications that are no longer in use. To dispose drugs, one can take outdated medications to community drug take-back programs. Prescription drugs should not be flushed down the toilet or drain unless the accompanying information specifically instructs you to do so. The [Food and Drug Administration's website](#) provides a list of drugs that can be flushed.
- When a drug-take back program is not available:
  - Take your prescription drugs out of their original containers.
  - Mix drugs with an undesirable substance, such as cat litter or used coffee grounds.
  - Put the mixture into a disposable container with a lid, such as an empty margarine tub, or into a sealable bag.
  - Conceal or remove any personal information, including Rx number, on the empty containers by covering it with black permanent marker or duct tape, or by scratching it off.
  - Place the sealed container with the mixture as well as the [empty drug containers in the trash](#).

For more information, go to SAMHSA's webpage on [prescription drug safety](#).

This entry was posted in the following categories: [Prevention](#)

You can [comment on this post](#) and [follow the comments via RSS](#).