

February 2010

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

The National Institutes of Health estimate that nearly 20 percent of people in the United States have used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons. This may be why prescription drugs are the second most commonly abused category of drugs, behind marijuana and ahead of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and other drugs.

Some may ask "How can this be?" First, it's important to understand what prescription drug abuse is. It's the taking of prescription medication that is not prescribed for you, or taking it for reasons or in dosages other than prescribed.

In 2008, 15.2 million Americans age 12 or older had taken a prescription medication for nonmedical purposes at least once in the prior year. There are three classes of medication most commonly abused:

- Opioids, such as Vicodin and OxyContin;
- Central Nervous System (CNS) depressants, such as Valium and Xanax; and



1 in 5 Teens misuse Prescription Drugs and share them with their friends.

- Stimulants, such as Ritalin and Adderall.

Of particular concern is the abuse rate with adolescents. The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) has been completing a Monitoring the Future survey since 2002, and in 2007, 9.6% and 5.2% of 12th grade students reported using Vicodin and OxyContin respectively in the past year.

So how can you help prevent prescription drug misuse or abuse?

- Take your medication(s) as prescribed.
- Keep your doctor informed about all medications you

are taking, including over-the-counter medications.

- Read the information your pharmacist provides before starting to take medications.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about your medication, especially if you are unsure about its effects.

To help prevent your child from misusing prescription drugs, educate, communicate and safeguard. Get serious and discuss the dangers and facts.

Special Points of Interest

- ⊕ http://www.health.state.ny.us/professionals/patients/medicines/prescription/abuse/parent_questions_and_answers.htm
- ⊕ <http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugpages/prescripdrugchart.html>
- ⊕ <http://www.drugfree.org>
- ⊕ <http://www.drugabuse.gov/DrugPages/prescription.html>
- ⊕ <http://www.adolescent-substance-abuse.com/pharm-parties.html>