



PRESCRIPTION DRUG AND OVER THE COUNTER DRUG MISUSE

Problem:

- Although recent drug use trends in the U.S. suggest that the use of illicit drugs among young people has been declining, at the same time misuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications continues to rise. **More teens abuse prescription drugs than any illicit drug except marijuana.**
- Misuse can refer to the practice of diverting medications that are normally needed by someone else, or taking more than the therapeutic dose to intentionally obtain an increased feeling of euphoria or other side effect such as hallucinations. Teens today do not need to look further than the family medicine cabinet to get drugs.
- In Tennessee, one in three teens report knowing someone who abuses prescription drugs. The most commonly abused classes of prescription drugs include opioids or pain relievers, sedatives and tranquilizers, and stimulants, with most of the recent rise in prevalence attributable to abuse of prescription or over-the-counter (OTC) pain medications.
- Among youths ages 12 to 17, Tennessee has the sixth highest percentage who abuse prescription pain medication.

Signs/ Symptoms:

A range of symptoms of prescription drug use can occur. The specific symptom depends on the drug being abused.

1. Opioids are used as pain killers in clinical settings. They lower heart and breathing rates that in turn may leave a person looking lethargic or intoxicated.
2. Stimulants have the opposite effect. They increase metabolism, heart and respiration rates. Nervousness, irritability, hyper-sensitivity and insomnia are some visible side effects.

3. Sedatives are used to control anxiety. Drowsiness, confusion and impaired judgment can be seen in people that abuse this medication.
4. Over the Counter (OTC) medications such as dextromethorphan can be found in some cough and cold medications. High doses of these medications can cause hallucinations, numbness and stomach pain. Medications that combine opioids and over-the-counter medication can cause organ damage. Excess acetaminophen may cause liver damage and excess ibuprofen may cause damage to the stomach and intestines.

Recommendations:

To reduce prescription drug abuse, The Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) recommends these strategies:

1. Safeguard all medications at home. Monitor quantities and control access.
2. Set clear rules for children about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider's advice and dosages.
3. Be a good role model by following these same rules with your own medicine.
4. Properly conceal and dispose of old or unused medicines in the trash.
5. Ask friends and family to safeguard their prescriptions as well.

Resources:

To find more information about prescription drug abuse:

www.whoyouwant2be.org

A service of Centerstone Mental Health Center in Tennessee (888) 291-HELP (4357)

www.taadas.org

A wide array of substance abuse related information (free and for purchase) from the Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug and other Addiction Services (877) 863-6914 or locally (615) 780-5901

Great Resources for Parents at:

www.drugfree.org

www.theantidrug.com