

# *targeted* MESSAGING

*While there are many players who participate in planning and implementing interventions, parents/adult caregivers, law enforcement officers, educators, healthcare providers, pharmacists, other non-traditional messengers and teens themselves are ideally-suited to help teenagers get the message that Rx abuse is dangerous. Coalitions need to create messages that will resonate with these key players so they will become and remain engaged.*

Parents and adult caregivers are often caught unaware that their teens may be abusing Rx medications. They are all too often surprised when they discover that their children are abusing these drugs under their watch. They have much to learn about Rx abuse and must keep it on their radar screen along with alcohol, marijuana and other drugs.

## **1. Get the facts—teen Rx abuse is a problem:**

- Educate yourself about this growing trend.
- New users of prescription drugs have caught up with new users of marijuana, and next to marijuana, the most common illegal drugs teens are abusing are prescription medications.

## **2. Protect your teenager.**

- Watch for behavioral and physical symptoms of abuse.
- Check for signs of Rx medications that do not belong in his/her room.
- Talk with other parents and share information.

## **3. Talk with your teens and grandchildren to dispel the belief that Rx drugs can be safely abused.**

## **4. Safeguard your medications.**

- Lock up your meds.
- Keep track of medication quantities.
- Properly dispose of them if they are no longer needed.

*parents &  
adult  
caregivers*





Law enforcement officers could be the first on the scene when someone calls 911 either to report cases of abuse or when someone is experiencing overdose symptoms.

1. Teens are abusing Rx drugs, and the problem is larger than anyone, including police officers, may believe.
2. Take teen Rx abuse seriously—you could be saving a life and future generations:
  - When you encounter a case, fill out the paperwork.
  - Spend time with the teen and his/her family.
  - Refer the family to appropriate healthcare providers.
3. Use this intervention to provide “wake-up calls” to young abusers.



Educators have a unique view of the teens under their charge. Given the fact that students spend seven hours a day, five days a week in school, teachers, school administrators, coaches and/or school nurses may spot problems before parents do. Educators also often become adult mentors to students. These realities provide excellent opportunities to educate young people about the dangers of Rx abuse, and problems may be easily spotted and addressed because of educator involvement. Educators are also afforded the opportunity to continuously educate teens about the realities of Rx drug abuse.

1. In spite of the fact that there have been reductions in illicit drug abuse, teens are abusing Rx medications.
2. New users of prescription drugs have caught up with new users of marijuana, and next to marijuana, the most common illegal drugs teens are abusing are prescription medications.
3. The physical and psychological realities of drug abuse and addiction are devastating and can ruin a student’s future aspirations.
4. You are part of the solution.  
Take action. Watch for signs of Rx abuse among your students, and do something about it.

Healthcare providers, such as doctors and nurses, are well-positioned to influence practices around patient medication use. They can also identify problems at the source and quickly intervene when necessary.

1. **Despite reductions in illicit drug use among teens, the abuse of Rx medications is significant—second only to marijuana.**
2. **Teens believe that abusing Rx medications is safer than abusing illicit ones.**
3. **You are part of the solution.**
  - Watch for signs of Rx abuse.
  - Talk to your patients about drug-taking behaviors that can put them at-risk.
  - Screen patients for prescription drug abuse and refer them to treatment when necessary.
  - Tell your patients not to share medicines. It is illegal and punishable by law. Proper storage and disposal of unused medications saves lives.



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Pharmacists can create opportunities to educate consumers about proper, Rx storage and disposal. They can also spot potential cases of doctor shopping and fraud.

1. **Rx abuse prevention starts here at my counter.**
2. **Educate consumers, collaborate with healthcare providers, and when you spot a problem, take action.**

However, be aware that legitimate patients need pain medications.
3. **Promote proper Rx etiquette:**
  - Don't share medications. It is illegal and punishable by law.
  - Safeguard your medications—lock them up, keep track of medication quantities and properly dispose of them if they are no longer needed.



We typically think of parents and educators for prevention messaging, but non-traditional messengers, such as veterinarians, dentists, realtors and grandparents are also important. They are also part of the community and come in contact with teens and their families. These individuals may unknowingly contribute to teen Rx abuse because it's not on their radar screen.

1. Teen Rx abuse is a growing problem, and you can be part of the solution.
2. If you prescribe pain medications, even if it's for animals, be on the alert for potential abuse.
3. If you are a realtor, tell your clients to lock up their medicines before opening their homes to strangers.
4. For others, pass on the message to:  
Use medications only as directed, store/lock up the medicines in a safe place and discard them properly when they are no longer needed.



*non-traditional messengers*

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Teens have an important role to play in preventing Rx abuse because their actions will influence the behavior of their peers. The key is to give teens the information they need with language and approaches that they respect.

1. **The truth is that Rx abuse is just as dangerous as illicit drug abuse.**  
Overdosing on these drugs can put you in a coma, stop your heart and can kill you.
2. **Other effects include:**  
Nausea and vomiting, dizziness, inability to concentrate, insomnia, track marks (if you're injecting), staggering or stumbling, impaired memory or judgment, uncontrollable diarrhea, unconsciousness, withdrawal symptoms, panic attacks, delusions, dependence and addiction.
3. **Using Rx medications without a valid prescription is illegal.**
4. **The same refusal skills that you use when you say “no” to alcohol and other drugs work here, too.** Regardless, teens say that when you say, “no,” you should not judge the other person's behavior. Ways to say, “no” include:
  - “No thanks—not into it.”
  - “Not today. I'm not interested.”
5. **Teens agree that they should know the signs and symptoms of abuse, and go to trusted adults if they know someone who needs help.**



*teens*