

Did you know that 20 percent of teens say they have taken a prescription drug without having a prescription for it themselves, and close to four percent report misusing over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicine to get high? When prescription drugs are misused, they can be just as dangerous as illegal drugs. More than half of the drug overdose deaths in the United States each year are caused by prescription drug misuse.

How Prescription Drugs are Misused:

- Taking someone else's prescription medication, even if it is for a medical reason.
- Taking a prescription medication in a way other than prescribed—for instance, taking more than the prescribed dosage or taking it more often, or crushing pills into powder to snort or inject the drug.
- Taking prescription medication to get “high.”
- Mixing prescription drugs with alcohol or certain other drugs.

Prescription drugs that affect the brain can cause physical dependence that could lead to addiction. Medications that affect the brain can change the way it works—especially when taken over a period of time or with increasing doses. They can change the body's natural reward system, making it harder for a person to feel good without the drug or lead to intense cravings, which can make it hard to stop using.

Every medication has some risk for harmful effects, sometimes serious ones. Doctors and dentists consider the potential benefits and risks to each patient before prescribing medications and take into account a lot of different factors:

- **Personal information.** Health providers consider a person's weight, how long they've been prescribed the medication, other medical conditions, and what other medications they are taking. Someone misusing prescription drugs may overload their system or put themselves at risk for dangerous drug interactions that can cause seizures, coma, or even death.
- **Form and dose.** Doctors know how long it takes for a pill or capsule to dissolve in the stomach, release drugs into the bloodstream, and reach the brain. When misused, prescription drugs are sometimes taken in larger quantities or in ways that change the way the drug works in the body and brain, putting the person at greater risk for an overdose.
- **Side effects.** Prescription drugs are designed to treat a specific illness or condition. But they often have side effects, some of which can be uncomfortable, and in some cases, dangerous. Side effects can be worse when prescription drugs are not taken as prescribed or are used in combination with other substances.

In addition, misusing over-the-counter drugs that contain DXM (an ingredient in cold and cough medicines) can also produce very dangerous effects. Misusing prescription cough medicine can lead to nausea and dizziness, and in some cases, seizures and overdose.

How to Help Prevent Medicine Abuse:

- **TALK** to your teen about medicine abuse. Teens who learn about the risks of drugs from their parents are 50% less likely to use drugs.
- **MONITOR** your medicine cabinets and your teen's activities.

For more information, please visit our website at www.drugfreeadamscounty.org.