



**Talk Lock Connect**

Prevent medicine misuse in Iowa.



## FAQs for Parents

### About Rx & Over-the-Counter (OTC) Drug Abuse & Misuse

**Q: At what age are teens abusing prescription drugs?**

**A:** Kids as young as 12 are trying or using prescription drugs non-medically — to get high or for “self-medicating.” Pharmaceuticals are often more available to 12-year-olds than illicit drugs because they can be taken from the medicine cabinet at home, rather than drugs like marijuana which necessitate knowing someone who uses or sells the drug.

**Q: Why do some teenagers view prescription drugs as safer than illicit drugs?**

**A:** Some teens perceive prescription drugs as safe because doctors prescribe them and their family members use them regularly. For teens, getting pills may be easier than getting pot or alcohol. Since prescription drugs are professionally manufactured in a lab, they don’t carry the notoriety of illicit street drugs.

**Q: What types of prescription drugs are teens abusing?**

**A:** The National Institute on Drug Abuse identifies three types of prescription medications that are commonly abused — narcotic pain relievers (e.g., oxycodone, hydrocodone); stimulants (e.g., methylphenidate); and central nervous system depressants (e.g., diazepam, pentobarbital sodium). They also identify the abuse of dextromethorphan (DXM), a common ingredient in over-the-counter cough and cold remedies, by teens.

**Q: Do different aged youth abuse different types of medications?**

**A:** Yes. Painkillers are the most common pharmaceutical abused by teens, especially by younger teens. Stimulant abuse is more common among older teens and college

students than among younger teens.

**Q: What’s the easiest step to take to prevent my child from abusing prescription drugs?**

**A:** **Talk** with your children about the potential danger of abusing these drugs. This is one of the most effective things you can do as a parent. **Lock** up all prescription medication securely and out of reach, rather than in an unlocked medicine cabinet. It is also important to monitor your prescription and OTC drugs. **Connect** with the Iowa Substance Abuse Awareness Center for more information about protecting your children from prescription and OTC drug abuse.

**Q: What’s the most effective step to take to prevent prescription drug abuse by my child?**

**A:** Talk to your teens openly and honestly. Warn them that taking prescription medications without a doctor’s supervision can be just as dangerous and potentially as lethal as taking illicit drugs.

**Q: How do I start the talk with my teen about prescription drug abuse?**

**A:** Start by taking advantage of any moment that makes it easy for you to start a conversation and make a point. These “teachable moments” are everyday events in your life when you can point out things you’d like your child to know. It may be while you ride in the car, listen to a radio commercial or view a scene in a TV show or video together. Do this often, and you’ll soon be able to develop an ongoing dialogue with your child. Then, when the conversation is about drugs, make a special point to tell kids how dangerous prescription

Visit us at: **IowaMedicineTLC.org** | Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center Helpline: **866-242-4111**

*The Iowa Medicine TLC campaign is sponsored by the Governor’s Office of Drug Control Policy and administered by The Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center, a program funded by the Iowa Department of Public Health.*



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drug abuse really is.

**Q: Specifically, what do I need to tell my teen about prescription drugs?**

**A:** Here is a list of items to cover:

- Pharmaceuticals taken without a prescription or a doctor's supervision can be just as dangerous as taking illicit drugs or alcohol. Also, taking a prescription medication without a proper prescription is illegal.
- Prescription medications are powerful substances. While sick people taking medication under a doctor's care can benefit enormously, prescription medication can have a very different impact on a well person.
- Painkillers are made from opioids, the same substance in heroin. If prescription drugs are mixed with alcohol or other drugs, the dangers only multiply.
- Many pills look the same, but depending on the drug and the dosage, the effects can vary greatly from mild to lethal.
- Prescription medications, as all drugs, can cause dangerous interactions with other drugs or chemicals in the body.

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