



## COMMONLY ABUSED OTC & PRESCRIPTION DRUGS:

Virtually every drug that is abused by adults is also abused by adolescents. Here are a few of the most commonly abused OTC and prescription medications:

- Cold medications (for example, Sudafed®, Benadryl®).
- Depressants (for example, barbiturates, benzodiazepines), sometimes called “reds, yellows, yellow jackets, downers or roofies”.
- Stimulants (for example, amphetamines, cocaine, methamphetamine), sometimes called “bennies, black beauties, speed, uppers, blow, crack, rock, toot, crank, crystal, or skippy”.
- Narcotics (for example, morphine, codeine, OxyContin®, Vicodin®), sometimes called “cody, schoolboy, tango and cash, or monkey”.

## SIGNS OF ABUSE & ADDICTION

Some physical signs of abuse and addiction include:

- Cycles of increased energy, restlessness, and inability to sleep (often seen in stimulants).
- Abnormally slow movements, speech or reaction time, confusion and disorientation (often seen in opiates, benzodiazepines and barbiturates).
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain.
- Cycles of excessive sleep.
- Unexpected changes in clothing, such as constantly wearing long sleeved shirts, to hide scarring at injection sites.
- Suspected drug paraphernalia such as unexplained pipes, roach clips or syringes.
- Progressive, severe dental problems (especially with methamphetamine).

Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection

### Prescription Monitoring Program

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(860) 713-6073 • [www.ct.gov/dcp](http://www.ct.gov/dcp)



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# Prescription Drugs Abuse Among Teens



## Teens Using Over-The-Counter (OTC) and Prescription Medication To Get High



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## GROWING CRISIS

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Prescription drug abuse by teens and young adults is a serious problem in the United States. As reported in the Partnership for a Drug Free America's 2008 annual tracking study:

- 1 in 5 teens has abused a prescription (Rx) pain medication.
- 1 in 5 report abusing prescription stimulants and tranquilizers.
- 1 in 10 has abused cough medication.

Also, according to the data, many teens think these drugs are safe because they have legitimate uses, but taking them without a prescription to get high or "self-medicate" can be as dangerous – and addictive – as using street drugs (cocaine, heroin, etc).

- 2 in 5 teens agree that Rx medicines, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor, are "much safer" to use than illegal drugs.
- 3 out of 10 teens believe prescription pain relievers – even if not prescribed by a doctor – are not addictive.
- More than half of teens don't agree strongly that using cough medicines to get high is risky.



## WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

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Know what types of over-the-counter (OTC) and prescriptions medications you have in the house. If they're your prescriptions, keep track of how many pills you have. If you need to refill your prescription sooner than you feel is necessary, someone may be taking your pills without you knowing it.

- Do not keep any medications in your bathroom medicine cabinet. Consider a small combination safe or a locked drawer to store your medications.
- Ask friends and family to take the same precautions. Grandma's hip replacement pain medication may be in the bathroom cabinet, and Grandma might not even realize her pills are missing.
- Talk to your teen about the dangers that exist with taking prescription and over-the-counter medications; just because they're "legal" does not make the potential to be addictive or dangerous any less.



## UNDERSTANDING TEEN BEHAVIOR

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Taking OTC or prescription medication in a manner not prescribed (non-medical use) by a doctor is illegal, dangerous, and sometimes deadly.

### Teens believe these drugs are safer and often:

- Take more than the recommended dose.
- Combine prescription and over the counter drugs with alcohol, which can be potentially fatal.
- Practice "pharming", sharing, mixing and ingesting large doses of prescription and over the counter drugs.
- Discount the potential dangers of OTC and prescription medications because they are physician prescribed and do not carry the stigma of "street drugs".