

USCM Fact Sheet on Rx Medication Abuse

- Every day, more than 2,500 teenagers abuse prescription medication for the first time¹.
- More than half of teens obtain medications from friends and family.¹
- 12 to 17 year olds abuse prescription drugs more than they abuse ecstasy, crack/cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine combined
- Prescription drug abuse by teens is exceeded only by marijuana use, and there are just as many new abusers (initiates) 12 and older of pain relievers as there are for marijuana.²
- The prescription drugs most commonly abused by teens are painkillers, prescribed to treat pain; depressants, such as sleeping pills or anti-anxiety drugs; and stimulants, mainly prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).³
- Sixty percent (60%) of teens who have abused prescription painkillers did so before age 15
- Some teens use prescription and OTC drugs with alcohol or other drugs, which could lead to dangerous drug interactions and other serious medical consequences.
- Many young people mistakenly think that it is safer to misuse prescription medications than illegal street drugs. There is less social stigma attached to misusing medications so it seems more acceptable to teens.
- These medications have a legitimate medical use when used properly under the doctor's supervision, but misuse of these medications can lead to addiction, overdose and even death.
- The illegal trafficking and abuse of prescription medications can interfere with the care of people suffering from serious illnesses and injuries by making it difficult for them to get the medications they need.
- People should keep their medications in a secure location and know how much medication is in the prescription container, encourage friends and relatives, especially grandparents, to also safeguard and regularly monitor the medications in their homes, and consult a pharmacist about how to properly dispose of medications that are no longer needed.

¹ Partnership for a Drug Free America/ ONDCP, "Teens and Prescription Drugs", Feb., 2007

² National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2007

³ Office of National Drug Control Policy, Prescription for Danger, Jan. 2008