

# Last year, millions of parents learned they were their teen's drug dealer.

A new kind of drug abuse is killing our kids. What every parent needs to know.

**43 PERCENT OF TEENS** report having friends who abuse prescription drugs. Even more disturbing: our kids are accessing these drugs -- absolutely free -- right in our own homes. How big a problem is it? Unintentional drug overdoses in the U.S. now outnumber traffic fatalities, and Rx drug abuse is the sad reason why.

## FREE DRUGS FROM PARENTS?

Nearly four billion prescriptions are filled in this country every year. Some experts estimate 1/3 of these prescriptions are never used. (How many pills were unused from your last Rx?) But for many of us, it seems wrong to throw away those not-quite-empty bottles. And that's bad news for curious teenagers.

**HOW KIDS ABUSE Rx DRUGS:** It's no secret that many drugs have unintended alternate uses. Many teens know which painkillers can get you high, especially when mixed with alcohol. Many students cram for exams by misusing drugs that treat ADHD or sleeplessness. Sedatives, amphetamines, anti-depressants, barbiturates, OTC cough medicines with dextromethorphan...you may not know how to misuse them, but others do.

**IS YOUR KID MISUSING?** By senior year of high school, more than one in ten teens will have abused prescription painkillers. Eight percent will have abused



sedatives; another twelve percent will misuse prescriptions for ADHD. More kids misuse painkillers every year than use cocaine. Many kids think Rx drugs are 'safer' than illegal drugs. And it's so much easier to avoid suspicion with Rx drugs.

**IS YOUR HOME SAFE?** The short brutal answer? No. Pharmacists keep drugs locked away, but the rest of us certainly don't. One industry group estimates that America's medicine cabinets contain over 200,000,000 pounds of leftover prescriptions.

**THE NEW DRUG EPIDEMIC.** In the mid-1970s, an international heroin epidemic pushed overdose deaths to 1.5 per 100,000

US population. The cocaine epidemic of 1989-93 doubled drug deaths to almost 3 in 100,000. Today's Rx drug epidemic has helped push the overdose rate higher: over 10 deaths per 100,000 population in 2010.

## THE MEDICINE ABUSE PROJECT

aims to raise awareness among kids, parents, health care professionals, law enforcement and government officials, and educators. Our goal: cut teen medicine abuse in half in five years, but two things have to happen: First, safeguard your meds. Second, talk to your kids.

## SAFEGUARD YOUR MEDS NOW.

Please remove all prescriptions from 'public' spaces in your home. Clear out your medicine cabinets and closets, especially in bathrooms visitors use. It's hard to change the patterns of a lifetime, but we must start throwing away prescriptions when we're done with them.

**TALK WITH YOUR KIDS.** When you safeguard your house, tell your kids what you're doing and why. Ask what they see at school, and how it affects friends and classmates. And whenever you give your kids medicine, you have another perfect teaching moment. Be sure to say the single most important thing a parent can say to their child: "I don't want you to do drugs." And be sure to point out that misusing legal drugs can be just as deadly as using illegal drugs. Because it is.



Safeguard your medications. Talk to your kids. Visit [drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org) to learn more.

