



Preventing The Abuse of Prescription and Over the Counter Drugs

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT ABUSE?

1. Safeguard all drugs at home. Monitor quantities and control access.
2. Set clear rules for teens about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider's advice and dosages.
3. Be a good role model by following these same rules with your own medicines.
4. Properly conceal and dispose of old or unused medicines in the trash.
5. Ask friends and family to safeguard their prescription drugs as well.
6. For warning signs of abuse and intervention strategies see: www.theantidrug.com

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April is Clean out the Medicine Cabinet Month

It's simple to protect your home. Either throw pills in the trash or dispose of them at one of our Saturday events in April from 10 am to 2 pm at a  near you.

For event locations, home disposal methods, and permanent Rx disposal locations see: www.cleanoutthecabinet.org

The Problem

Although adults and teens are turning away from street drugs, there's a new threat from the family medicine cabinet: the abuse of prescription (Rx) and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. Unfortunately, **Utah has one of the highest pain pill abuse rates in the nation** and more teens abuse Rx drugs than any illicit drug except marijuana⁽¹⁾. Together we can change these facts.

What Prescriptions are Abused?

Prescriptions of abuse include **painkillers**, such as those drugs prescribed after surgery; **depressants**, such as sleeping pills or anti-anxiety drugs; and **stimulants**, such as those drugs prescribed for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Teens are also abusing OTC drugs, such as cough and cold remedies.

What Influences Rx Abuse in Utah County?

There are a number of factors influencing abuse—local research suggests⁽²⁾

1. **Education from medical professionals** on the proper use, storage and disposal of Rx is lacking and can contribute to abuse
2. **Pain pills are too available**—there are an estimated 7 million left over pain pills in Utah County homes (30 per household). This availability can influence adults and teens to abuse
3. **Community norms** discourage alcohol, and illicit drug use, but often do not discourage the misuse or abuse of prescription drugs



What are the dangers?

There are serious health risks related to abuse of Rx drugs. A single large dose of Rx or OTC painkillers or depressants can cause breathing difficulty that can lead to death. Stimulant abuse can lead to hostility or paranoia, or the potential for heart system failure or fatal seizures. Even in small doses, depressants and painkillers have subtle effects on motor skills, judgment, and ability to learn. Youth who continuously abuse Rx or OTC drugs may experiment with illicit drugs too.