

Talking To Teens About Medicine Abuse

(NAPSA)—There are ways parents can help prevent their teens from abusing prescription drugs—a dangerous situation that’s more common than you might think.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), nearly one in five teens (or 4.5 million kids) reports abusing prescription medications to get high.

In fact, today’s teenagers are more likely to have abused medications than a variety of illegal drugs such as ecstasy, cocaine, crack and methamphetamine. Fortunately, there are ways to keep kids safe. Try these tips from the national outreach program “Not Worth the Risk—Even if It’s Legal,” sponsored by the National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE).

Medicines Within Reach

Teens report abusing a variety of medicines, including cough syrups, stimulants, tranquilizers and pain relievers, commonly found in medicine cabinets. In one survey, 62 percent of teens said prescription pain relievers are easy to find at home, while 52 percent said they’re “available everywhere.”

Talk To Your Kids

Studies show that parents could possibly cut the likelihood of their teens using drugs in half just by talking to their kids. However, only 31 percent of teens report that they “learn a lot about the risk of drugs” from their parents, according to another study.

“It’s vital that parents communicate with their kids about the medically appropriate use of medications and the harmful consequences of intentionally abusing them, and where to seek treatment if necessary,” noted Ray Bullman, NCPIE Executive Vice President.

It’s important for parents to talk to teens about the dangers of abusing prescription drugs. ㊟

Parents: Take Steps

- Lock your medicine cabinet or keep medicines that could potentially be abused in a less accessible place.
- Avoid stockpiling medicines.
- Keep track of how much is in each bottle or container in your medicine cabinet.
- Monitor your child’s Internet usage. Watch for suspicious Web sites and e-mails that seem to be promoting the abuse of prescription medicines.

The Three Rs

Teach teens the three Rs of prescription drugs:

- *Respect*—respect the power of your medicine and the value of medicines properly used.
- *Risk*—all medicines have risks as well as benefits. Risk increases dramatically when medicines are taken inappropriately.
- *Responsibility*—take responsibility for learning about how to take each medication safely.

For more information, call (800) 662-HELP or visit www.samhsa.gov or www.ncpie.net.