

# Prescription Safety

The abuse and misuse of prescription pain medication is very dangerous

## Prescription Drug Misuse

Most people take prescriptions responsibly under a doctor's care. However, there has been a steady increase in the nonmedical use of medications, especially by adolescents and young adults.

Prescription drug misuse occurs when a person takes a prescription medication that is not prescribed for him/her, or takes it for reasons or in dosages other than prescribed. The nonmedical use of prescription medications has increased in the past decade and has surpassed all illicit drugs except marijuana in the United States. Misuse of prescription drugs can produce serious health effects, including addiction.

Commonly misused prescription medications include those that are intended to relieve pain, anxiety and sleep disorders.

## Why should you be concerned?

- Despite what many teens and adults think, abusing prescription drugs is not safer than misusing illicit drugs.
- Prescription drug misuse may begin with inappropriate prescribing or lack of patient compliance with medication regimens. Continued misuse may lead to abuse and dependence.
- Prescription painkillers can lead to addiction and heroin use.
- Federal Drug Abuse Warning Network data consistently shows the increasing involvement of prescription drugs in emergency department visits related to both drug misuse or abuse and adverse reactions.
- The percentage of New York State high school students who reported using heroin more than doubled between 2005 and 2011 (1.8 % to 4%). (*Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)*)
- Nationwide, the number of individuals using heroin during the past 30 days more than doubled between 2007 and 2012 (161,000 to 335,000). (*NSDUH 2012*)

## Remember

- Prescription drug misuse is on the rise and has resulted in unintended drug addiction and death.
- Ask your provider if any of the medications prescribed for your family have a potential for abuse.
- Medication is intended only for the person for whom it was prescribed.
- Never share medications.
- Don't mix medications. Speak to your health care provider about all medications you are taking, including over-the-counter medications.
- Medications are unsafe when not taken as prescribed.
- Store all medications in one designated location, in a dry and cool place. The kitchen and bathroom are bad places to store medication because of heat and moisture.
- Be sure the medication location is safe and secure, away from children, adolescents and others.
- Routine tracking of all medication is a good idea, especially when others live with or visit you.
- Discuss the importance of safely using medications with family and friends.



**Combat Heroin  
and Prescription  
Drug Abuse**

1047

Produced by the New York State Department of Health  
and the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services


9/15

# Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medicine Misuse

To download a useful tracking tool for your own medicine cabinet, visit [www.combatheroin.ny.gov](http://www.combatheroin.ny.gov).

With this tool, you can list your prescriptions, the date filled, the expiration date, and original quantity. Once a week, count the pills remaining and mark the date.

The following organizations offer information and resources that can help you and your family.



**Find help and hope**  
for alcoholism, drug abuse or problem gambling  
Call or Text **1-877-8-HOPENY**  
Text: HOPENY (467369) 1-877-846-7369



**Combat Heroin  
and Prescription  
Drug Abuse**

**Office of Alcoholism and  
Substance Abuse Services**

**Department  
of Health**

Combat Heroin – [www.combatheroin.ny.gov](http://www.combatheroin.ny.gov)

New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services – [www.oasas.ny.gov](http://www.oasas.ny.gov)

New York State Department of Health – [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)