

More Access, Fewer Perceived Risks, and "Sorta Legal"

Young people have the misperception that abusing medicine is NOT dangerous. Those who would normally experiment with alcohol or marijuana think that what is found in their home is safer than street drugs.

According to the Partnership For A Drug Free America, most parents do not think that their teen is vulnerable to RX/OTC abuse. Parents do not understand the behavior of intentionally abusing medicine to get high. They also think that if their teen did abuse medicines, it would not be as dangerous as "Street Drugs".

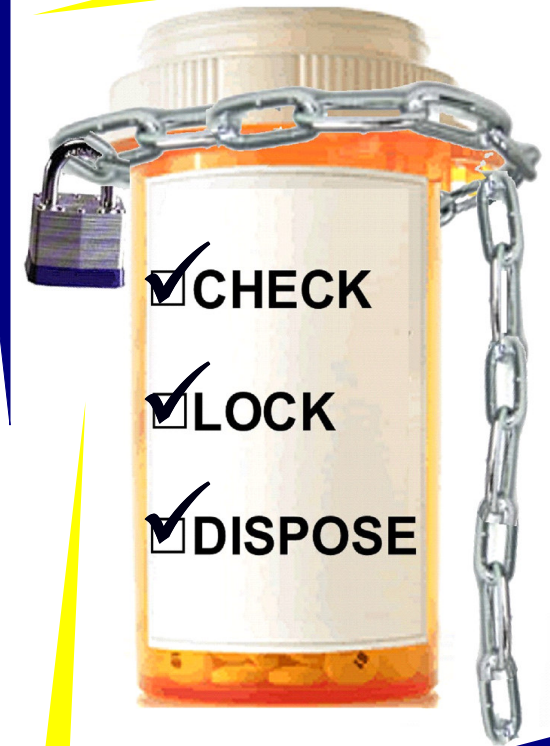
There is an ease of access from one's own home, a relative or friend's house, or someone else's prescription. Prescription and OTC medicine is easy to purchase over the internet.

Prescription/OTC drugs are seen as sanitized, sanctioned, and safe. Prescription/OTC abuse is also an easy way for young people who would not normally have done so to move up the ladder on to dangerous illegal drugs.

Seattle leaders **Dr. Robert Day and Cynthia "CJ" Taylor** started the Science and Management of Addictions (SAMA) Foundation after years of struggle to find effective treatment for their drug addicted teenage daughter. Dr. Day, President and Director Emeritus of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and CJ Taylor, Founding Executive Director of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Puget Sound Affiliate, were struck by the lack of resources and treatment options for adolescent substance addiction, and concerned that local laws and insurance practices discouraged the development of services for this patient population.

While treatment for diseases such as cancer, asthma, depression, heart disease and others has grown by leaps and bounds in the past ten years, treatment for substance addiction has developed much more slowly, hindered by lack of funding, societal stigma, and absence of energized and organized patient advocacy groups.

SAMA is a privately funded non-profit organization based in Seattle, with the goal of improving the management as well as the science of substance addiction. Realizing the gap in services for adolescents, our primary goals are to improve early detection and treatment of substance addictions, and to expand resources for the families of drug addicted teens. Through helping and empowering parents to recognize substance abuse early and assist in its treatment as soon as it is recognized, we hope to help teenagers avoid the disabling physical, emotional, and behavioral effects of substance addiction.



1 in 5 teens have abused prescription medications

1 in 10 teens have abused over-the-counter medications

Too many young people - often times typically developing teens who are "experimenting" - have died because of prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drug abuse.

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SAMA

SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT *of* ADDICTIONS

The SAMA Foundation Family Action Council is spreading the word about the epidemic of prescription drug abuse among young people. Abuse of prescription drugs is on the rise among young people, and the consequences to our families and communities are devastating.

More than half of young people who misuse prescription drugs get them from a friend or family member – from us. It is important to develop safe habits in handling prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications.

The misuse of medicines such as the following results in serious health risks, including addiction and death:

- Prescription pain relievers
- Prescription stimulants
- Prescription tranquilizers and sedatives
- OTC cough/cold with DXM (dextromethorphan)

Parents, grandparents – and all of us – need to be more aware of the dangers of prescription drugs, and to follow three simple steps:

CHECK :: LOCK :: DISPOSE

CHECK

The first step in controlling who gets their hands on your medications is checking what you have, and keeping careful track of quantities and expiration dates.

LOCK

It is all too easy for a substance intended to help us to cause us harm. So if you need to keep medicines in your home, keep them under lock and key.

While there is no one device recommended for safeguarding your medications, below are a few ideas:

- If you already have one, you can use an existing fire safe or gun safe.
- Use a cut-proof bag designed for travel safety

DISPOSE

It is essential to responsibly dispose of unused and unwanted prescriptions (do not flush, due to environmental concerns).

For narcotics and other medications that **cannot** be taken back to a pharmacy or other disposal site, the Unwanted Medicine Return Program recommends taking the following steps:

1. Keep the medication in its original container.
2. Modify the medications to discourage consumption by dissolving them in a small amount of water and mixing them with kitty litter, coffee grounds, or sawdust.
3. Tape the container closed and place in a sealable bag then in a non-transparent container.
4. Discard the container in the garbage (not the recycling bin) away from kids or pets.

For more details go to:

www.medicinereturn.com

www.samafoundation.org/prescription.html