Generation Rx
Preventing the Misuse and Abuse of Prescription Medications

A Drug-Taking Society

As a society, we have become more and more pharmaceuticalized at every age level. We have come to expect that there is a quick fix for almost any problem. And we are taking prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications at unprecedented rates.

These phenomena have consequences!

This activity is designed to engage students in a discussion relating to the abuse of prescription and OTC medications. We will explore the reasons for this abuse, the types of medications most prone to abuse, and the potential consequences of these behaviors. Our goal is to help students adopt healthy medication-taking behaviors, and we especially will seek to discourage the abuse of these potentially-harmful drugs. We will conclude with a discussion of general guidelines for using medications safely and a description of resources for students to help them better understand these issues.

Prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines can help alleviate disease symptoms, prevent diseases from occurring, and save lives. When abused, medications can lead to health problems including injury, hospitalization, or even death. Many teens are now abusing prescription and OTC medications. And while "street" drug abuse has generally declined over the past decade, abuse of prescription and OTC medications is **on the rise.**

Why might teens abuse prescription and OTC medications?

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What types of prescription medications are most prone to abuse?

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What types of over-the-counter medications are most prone to abuse?

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What are some possible health consequences of abusing prescription or OTC medications?

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Besides health concerns, what are some other consequences of abusing prescription or OTC medications?

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Did you know?

- Approximately 25% of drug-related **emergency department admissions** are due to the abuse of prescription or OTC medications.
- It is **against federal laws** to obtain prescription medications that are not prescribed for you.
- Many prescription medications are just as **addictive** as illicit drugs.
- **Unintentional drug overdose** is now the 2nd leading cause of accidental death in the U.S.! Prescription medications account for the vast majority of these overdoses.

America's biggest drug problem is not on the streets, it's in our medicine cabinets.

Would you consider the abuse of prescription or OTC medications to be a safe alternative to using "street" drugs? Why or why not?

How can you use medications safely?

Be SMARxT!

1. Only use prescription or OTC medications as directed by your medical professional
2. Never share your medications
3. Dismiss the pressure! Even if it seems that "everyone else" is abusing prescription and OTC drugs, they're not. Only a minority of teens choose to abuse these drugs.

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