

Protect Your Kids: 3 Steps to Safeguard Medicine in Your Home

Two-thirds of teens who report abuse of prescription medicine are getting them from friends, family and acquaintances. Make sure the teens in your life don't have access to your medicine.

Step 1: Monitor

Parents are in an influential position to immediately help reduce teen access to prescription medicine because medicine is commonly found in the home. But how aware are you of the quantities that are currently in your home? Think about this: would you know if some of your pills were missing? From this day forward, make sure you can honestly answer, "Yes."

Start by taking note of how many pills are in each of your prescription bottles or pill packets.

Keep track of your refills. This goes for your own medicine, as well as for your teens and other members of the household. If you find you need to refill your medicine more often than expected, that could indicate a problem.

If your teen has been prescribed a medicine, be sure you control the medicine, and monitor dosages and refills. You need to be especially vigilant with medicine that are known to be addictive and commonly abused by teens including Percocet, Vicodin, and Oxycontin.

Make sure your friends and relatives — especially grandparents — are also aware of the risks. Encourage them to regularly monitor their own medicines, including pain medications such as Percocet, Vicodin, Oxycontin, Morphine, and Codeine; anxiety medications, such as Xanax, Ativan, Valium, Halcion; sleeping aids, such as Ambien, Lunesta.

If there are other households your teen has access to, talk to those families as well about the importance of monitoring and safeguarding their medications.

Step 2: Secure

Approach securing your prescriptions the same way you would other valuables in your home, like jewelry or cash. There's no shame in helping protect those items and the same holds true for your medicine.

Take prescription medicine out of the medicine cabinet and secure them in a place only you know about.

If possible, keep all medicines, both prescription and over-the-counter, in a safe place, such as a locked cabinet your teen cannot access.

Tell relatives, especially grandparents, to lock their medicine or keep them in a safe place.

Talk to the parents of your teenager's friends. Encourage them to secure their prescriptions as well.

Step 3: Dispose

Safely disposing of expired or unused prescription medicine is a critical step in helping to protect your teens. Here's how to safeguard your family and home, and decrease the opportunity for your teens or their friends to abuse your medicine.

Take an inventory of all of the medicine in your home. Start by discarding expired or unused Rx and OTC medicine when your teens are not home.

Unbelievable as it may seem, teenagers will retrieve discarded prescription medicine from the trash. To help prevent this from happening, mix the medicine with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter. Put the mixture into an empty can or bag and discard.

Unless the directions on the packaging say otherwise, do not flush medicine down the drain or toilet.

To help prevent unauthorized refills and protect your own and your family's privacy, remove any personal, identifiable information from prescription bottles or pill packages before you throw them away.

Learn more about safeguarding and disposing of medicine, and find a medicine take-back location near you. **A green drug collection unit is now permanently located in the lobby of [Medford Police Department](#) (located at 100 Main Street).**

Source (and for more information): www.medicineabuseproject.org

For more information visit the Opioid Task Force on the web at: www.opioidtaskforce.org