



HOW DO I TALK WITH MY TEEN ABOUT PRESCRIPTION DRUGS?

In addition to speaking with your child about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, it's just as important to talk about prescription medications.

BEFORE THE TALK.

Spend some time learning about which prescription medications teens may be likely to misuse and what signs to look for. Kids who learn about the dangers of drug use early and often are much less likely to misuse them than those who do not receive these critical messages at home.

START THE CONVERSATION.

Find the right moment. A more natural discussion will increase the likelihood that your teen will listen. Ask open-ended questions to engage them in conversation. You can even use humor, so your child feels at ease and opens up a bit.

BE PATIENT AND READY TO LISTEN.

Let this be a conversation, rather than a lecture. Ask open-ended questions to encourage a more open and honest discussion. Demonstrate that you are listening by rephrasing their statements and asking clarifying questions—also known as “active listening.”

OFFER SUPPORT AND COMPASSION.

Let your child know you sympathize with the pressures of being a teen. Model healthy ways of coping with stress such as exercising, eating well and getting enough sleep. By doing this, you are demonstrating the importance of self-care which will benefit them as they journey out into the world.

PROVIDE THEM WITH INFORMATION.

Stay up to date on current trends and be a source of reliable information for your child. Don't just leave your child's anti-drug education up to their school. Being a teen can be hard, especially with mounting academic and social pressures. Some teens start misusing prescription drugs to try to deal with these pressures because they think they're somehow safer than other drugs—help your child understand that they are not.

TEACH THEM HOW TO SAY “NO.”

Kids who don't know what to say when someone offers them prescription drugs are more likely to give in to peer pressure. Help them be prepared should the situation arise by role playing so they are able to respond quickly and naturally. Let them know that they can use you as an excuse, for example, “No, my parents signed me up for the drug testing program at school.”

TALK OPENLY ABOUT YOUR FAMILY HISTORY.

If there is a history of addiction in your family, then your child has a greater risk of developing a problem. Discuss this risk with your child, as you would with any other illness.

ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS ABOUT PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.

In addition to talking with your teen about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, it's also important to talk about the misuse of prescription medications.



"I DON'T KNOW WHY WE'RE EVEN HAVING THIS TALK."

Even though this may not be a temptation for you at this point in your life, you may encounter someone offering you something that is harmful for your body. I want to have this conversation, so you are well-equipped with knowledge for the future, or perhaps you may need to help a friend.

"WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?"

As a teen, your brain is enormously flexible, learns rapidly and contains more neurons than an adult brain. That's why the teen brain can more quickly become addicted to medication or other drugs.

"YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I AM UNDER A LOT OF STRESS RIGHT NOW."

I hear you are feeling very overwhelmed with school/ friends/family/work, but I don't want you making choices that can hurt you. I want you to be able to cope with life's ups and downs in a healthy way. If you are under a lot of stress, then let's brainstorm some ideas on how to reduce your stress. If you think it would be helpful, we can speak with a professional for more guidance.

"EVERYONE DOES IT. IT HELPS WITH MY ANXIETY."

These drugs are very addictive because they produce a flood of dopamine – the brain's "feel good" messenger. This can damage your brain's ability to produce it naturally. When you artificially raise your dopamine levels, you make it harder to feel good without the drug. It also makes it harder to stop using drugs. That's why it's important that these types of drugs be taken under a doctor's care, so that they can properly diagnose and prescribe the correct dosage.

"KIDS AT SCHOOL ARE USING STIMULANTS SUCH AS ADDERALL TO GET BETTER GRADES"

I am proud of your hard work and that you earned your grades without relying on stimulants. I understand that there is a lot of pressure to do well. But, using a drug to do better on tests (or sports) is cheating and research has shown it is actually tied to getting lower grades. I know it's difficult to balance your school work, a social life and other interests, but I am more concerned with your well-being than your grades. There are some serious side effects of misusing stimulants include vomiting, tremors, increased heart and respiratory rates and cardiovascular collapse. How about we explore other relaxation and time-management skills to help you?