

# PARENTS: ARE YOU AWARE?

## Some of the most dangerous drugs might be in your own home in your medicine cabinet.

Many kids who abuse prescription drugs start by experimenting with whatever they find around the house.

Kids get access to powerful prescription drugs in their own homes; in the homes of friends, neighbors and relatives; on the internet; even from their own doctors or dentists.

Even Ritalin is a prescription drug youth commonly abuse.

## Prescription drugs can be dangerous; they are not safer than illegal drugs.

Prescription drugs may seem safe because they are “legal” and prescribed, but they’re not.

Used improperly alone or taken with other drugs or alcohol, prescription drugs can have serious physical side effects – such as vomiting, diarrhea, severe shaking, and loss of consciousness – and result in **addiction or even death.**

A popular way of abusing prescription drugs is to mix them with alcohol and street drugs into “cocktails” that can be deadly. **Just one pill can kill.**

## Youth prescription drug abuse is a problem in Maine. About 1 in 5 Maine youth grades 9-12 report having used a prescription drug not prescribed to them to get high.<sup>1</sup>

## Non-medical use of prescription drugs is the second most popular category of drug abuse after marijuana.

## Prescription drugs can be addictive and a gateway to other drugs like heroin.

Many prescription drugs can be addictive. Some prescription pain relievers, like OxyContin, Demerol, Tylenol with Codeine, Percocet, and Vicodin, contain opioids; they’re opiates like heroin. You might hear kids call them by their street names: o.c., oxy, oxycotton, percs, and vics to name a few. **Addiction can have rapid onset with opiates, especially among young people. Prescription opiates can also be a gateway to heroin.** Some youth swallow the pills; others crush them first and then snort or smoke the powder; and some melt or dissolve the medications and then inject them. Once kids become injection drug users, they have overcome a major barrier to trying heroin.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ✓ **Monitor and secure your medicine cabinet.** Know what’s in your medicine cabinet; keep track of it; and keep it safe from children and teens.
- ✓ **Monitor all medications your children are taking.** An adult – like a parent or a school nurse – should administer your child’s medications.
- ✓ **Educate yourself and talk to your kids.** Many kids don’t believe prescription drugs can be addictive or dangerous.

Kids who receive education about drugs from their parents are less likely to use them. Tell your kids about the negative effects that prescription drug abuse can have on their physical appearance, their health, their relationships, and their self-respect. **Know that they are listening, even if it seems like they aren’t.**

**If you are worried about your child, talk to a health care professional or call Narcotics Anonymous, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week:  
1-800-974-0062**

**For more information on the harmful effects of prescription drugs, visit these websites:**

[www.painfullyobvious.com](http://www.painfullyobvious.com)

[www.rx.samhsa.gov](http://www.rx.samhsa.gov)

[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)

You can also call the State of Maine Office of Substance Abuse’s Information & Resource Center at 1-800-499-0027.

<sup>1</sup> Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey, Maine Office of Substance Abuse, 2004. 17.5% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 22.1% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, 24.6% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders, and 22.3% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in Maine report having used prescription drugs not prescribed to them in their lifetimes.

*This information is provided by Project AWARE, a state-wide public awareness initiative about youth prescription drug abuse in Maine. Project AWARE is funded by a grant from PurduePharma. For more information, contact the Maine Association of Prevention Programs at (207) 621-8118.*