



Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition  
Promoting a Safe & Drug Free Roanoke Valley

[www.raysac.org](http://www.raysac.org)

# RAYSAC Radar

## Prescription drug abuse among teens is a growing and serious problem

**Many parents are UNAWARE!**

**Here's some important advice:**

- Get the facts. More teens abuse prescription drugs than any illicit drug except marijuana. In 2006, more than 2.1 million teens ages 12 to 17 reported abusing prescription drugs.
- The most commonly abused prescription medications are painkillers, like OxyContin® or Vicodin®. These produce sensations of euphoria and pleasure and are highly addictive. They can easily lead to overdose when crushed and snorted or mixed with other drugs, such as alcohol.
- Depressants, such as Valium® or Xanax®, are also commonly abused by teens. These drugs make users feel calm and reduce anxiety and tension. They are addictive and can be deadly when used in combination with prescription pain medications, some over-the-counter (OTC) cold and allergy drugs, or alcohol.
- In addition, stimulants, such as medications for ADD and ADHD – Ritalin® and Adderall® --are being abused by many teens to “help study better” in response to excessive pressure to do well in school or to suppress appetite for weight loss. These medications can be addictive, cause feelings of fear or paranoia and lead to serious health problems.
- Some OTC medications, such as cough medications containing dextromethorphan, are also abused by teenagers.
- Talk to your teens about the risks, and be specific. **Tell them that taking prescription or OTC drugs without a doctor's approval and supervision can be a dangerous — even deadly — decision. Dispel the myth that these drugs are less harmful than street drugs because they are available through a doctor or at the local drug store.**
- Take inventory in your own home and other homes your teen has access to, such as grandma's or other relatives'. Lock up medications or put them in a safe place where your kids or their friends can't access them. Move your OTC medications to a safe place as well. Just as you do for alcohol, make a note of the levels in each bottle. Do the same at relatives' homes, especially older relatives, who often take painkillers and would be less likely to notice a few pills missing.
- Coordinate with the parents of your teen's friends to make sure access to prescription and OTC drugs is restricted in their homes, as well.
- **Be familiar with the signs of abuse:** Slurred speech, staggering walk, sweating, nausea, vomiting, numbness of extremities, dilated pupils, drowsiness and dizziness.
- Understand why teens abuse prescription and OTC drugs. People abuse drugs because drugs change the way they feel. Many teens point to personal or family-related stress as a major reason, including stress around family life and relationships; academic competition; trying to fit in; the balance between school work, grades, and extracurricular activities like sports and clubs; and the desire to have the “ideal” physical appearance.
- Be vigilant about your teen's activities online. Anyone who has a computer and a credit card can order prescription drugs online even if they never see a doctor or get a written prescription. Routinely monitor the Web sites your teen has visited and track purchases made with a credit card. Be aware of what is mailed to your home.
- Set a good example. Don't abuse or share prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications.
- If you suspect your teen is using drugs, take action. Talk to your teen, reiterate your rules and expectations and enforce consequences. To get help, contact your teen's school counselor, pediatrician or family physician.

Source: Parents. The Anti-Drug

**Parents! Talk to your teen, they are listening!**