

REVEALING Rx ABUSE IN MINNESOTA

The abuse of prescription drugs is the fastest growing pattern of substance abuse in Minnesota.

7% of Minnesota 12th graders say they have taken a prescription drug to get high at least once in the past year.

Teens believe the myth that these drugs provide a safer high than street drugs, that there are fewer side effects, and that parents don't care as much if youth get caught.

But prescription drugs are just as dangerous. Nationally, more people die from the misuse of prescription drugs than from an overdose of street drugs.



And prescription drugs are often easier to get.

70% of teens say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from a family member's medicine cabinet.

But it isn't just about kids.

Poisoning and the misuse of prescription drugs was the leading cause of unintentional death among Minnesotans ages 45-54 in 2007.

Here are just a few examples from an endless list of drug combinations that can be *dangerous and even fatal*:

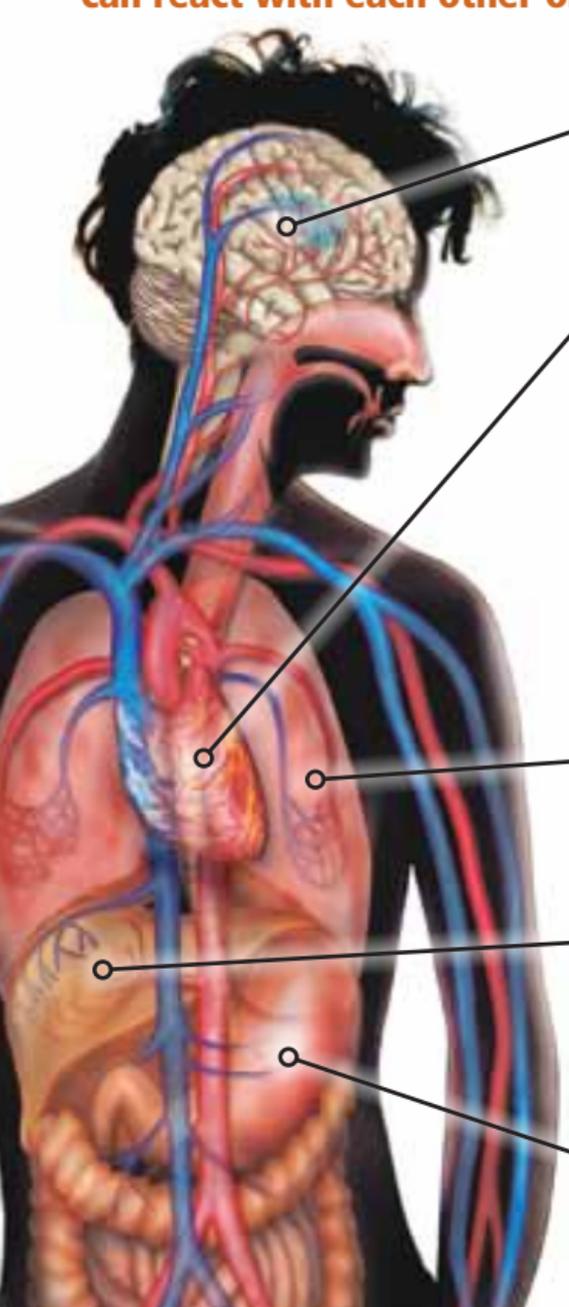
- **Anti-Anxiety Medications** (like Xanax or Klonopin) **and Pain Reliever Opiates** (like Vicodin, OxyContin or Percocet): Both depress the central nervous system and the desire to breathe.
- **Opiates** (like Vicodin, OxyContin or Percocet) **and Alcohol**: Both depress the central nervous system and the desire to breathe.
- **Ritalin and Concerta or Adderall**: Mixing more than one at the same time or taking more than the prescribed dosage can cause psychotic episodes, wild heartbeat and even heart attack.
- **Viagra and Nitroglycerin** (a nitrate for angina): Both dilate blood vessels and taken together can result in a dangerous drop in blood pressure.
- **Pills for Insomnia, Depression, Pain Relief and Anxiety**: Many depress the central nervous system and taken in combination can slow both the heart and breathing to fatal levels. (Think Heath Ledger or Chris Farley.)

This is not a complete list of drug combinations of which to be aware. It is just a sample to illustrate how common medications taken with other substances can be dangerous.

Safe use. Safe Storage. Safe Disposal.

- Only take prescription medications if they have been prescribed for you by a health care provider who understands your medical situation and health history.
- Understand and follow all dosage instructions. Everyone metabolizes substances differently.
- Adhere to expiration dates. Active ingredients can become weaker or stronger over time.
- Ask your doctor before adding any over-the-counter medications to those you already take. Each medication makes a difference.

Drugs, whether prescription or over-the-counter, can react with each other or alcohol to...



Change brain function. These changes can be damaging, addicting or even life-threatening.

Cause dangerous changes in blood pressure. Certain drugs cause blood vessels to dilate and blood pressure to drop. Compounding these drugs can reduce the amount of oxygenated blood flowing through the body. Severe increases in blood pressure can cause stroke or heart attack.

Slow or stop breathing. Too many depressants acting on the central nervous system can stop breathing altogether.

Overload the liver. When certain medications and alcohol compete in the body for absorption, their potency is often increased.

Irritate the stomach. Continuous or extreme irritation can create bleeding ulcers.



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How can you prevent prescription drug abuse in your home?

Safe storage. Safe use. Safe disposal.

- Safeguard all drugs and medications. Don't leave pills unattended.
- Monitor quantities and control access to bottles, even if it is a prescription for your teen. Be alert to your teen running out of pills quickly, losing pills or requesting refills.
- Discuss clear rules for teens about all drug use. This includes not sharing medications and following a doctor's advice and dosages.
- Be a good role model and follow the same rules with your own medications.
- Don't take medications in front of children.
- Don't call medications "candy."
- Try not to involve children as "helpers" with your medications. They should not have to remind you to take meds or bring you water.
- Ask family members and friends to safeguard their prescription drugs.
- Properly dispose of old or unused medicines.

Safe Disposal. Safe use. Safe Storage.



Community take-back programs

are the best way to ensure that unused or expired medications do not become diverted or contaminate our environment and water supply. (Check with local law enforcement or recycling programs to find out if a take-back program is available in your area.) But if a program does not exist near you, here are the steps for safer disposal:



Do not flush prescription drugs down the toilet or drain. Pharmaceutical contamination of our water supply is a growing problem.



- 1: Take it out.** Pour your prescription drugs out of the original container and into a sealable plastic bag. Dissolve pills by adding water. Destroy the label on the old container.
- 2: Mix it up.** Mix the prescription drugs that are no longer needed with an undesirable substance such as coffee grounds, cat litter or egg shells (so pets and children aren't tempted to eat them and no one is tempted to pull them out of the trash).
- 3: Seal it.** Seal the plastic bag and gently mix the contents together.
- 4: Hide it.** Put the plastic bag into a disposable container such as an empty margarine tub.
- 5: Trash it.** Place the sealed container in the trash.

There is help.

For yourself or someone you care about:

24-Hour Helpline 612-379-6363
or toll free **1-866-379-6363**
(answered by Crisis Connection)

www.revealingaddiction.com
click on "Help"