

Health Enews



Volume 3, Issue 8

September 13, 2017

Prescription Drug Epidemic

According to the U.S Surgeon General, more Americans use prescription opioids than smoke cigarettes. This makes sense considering prescriptions for opioid painkillers rose by 300 percent between 2000 and 2009. In fact, Americans use 80 percent of all opioids sold worldwide.

Ninth Leading Cause of Death

- In 2014, prescription drug overdoses killed more Americans than car crashes.
- In 2015, 52,404 Americans died from drug overdoses; 33,091 involved an opioid and nearly one-third of them, 15,281, were by prescription.
- In Alabama, which has the highest opioid prescription rate in the U.S., 143 prescriptions were written for every 100 people. As a result of over-prescribing opioids, the overdose death rate is rising.
- Dr. Tom Frieden, Director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), states that there is no other medication routinely prescribed for a nonfatal condition that kills patients so frequently.



Prescription Painkillers are Gateway Drugs

Oxycontin and other opioid pain killers have been identified as the primary gateway drug to heroin. Chemically, these drugs are very similar and provide a similar kind of high. According to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration report, nearly 80 percent of people who use heroin have previously used prescription pain killers.

Steps to Preventing Prescription Drug Abuse

Prescription drug abuse can occur in anyone who is in need of a painkiller, sedative, or stimulant. Ways to decrease your risk include:

- Make sure you're getting the right medication. Make sure your doctor clearly understands your condition and any history of addiction.
- Ask your doctor if there's an alternative medication with less potential for addiction.
- Follow directions carefully. Use your medication the way it was prescribed. Don't stop or change the dose of a drug on your own without talking to your doctor.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist if alcohol should be avoided when taking the drug.
- Discuss with your doctor or pharmacist if the drug may interact with any over-the-counter medication, herbs, or supplements you may be taking.



- Never use another person's prescription. Everyone is different, even if you have a similar medical condition. The drug may not be the right medication or dose for you. Physician's prescribe medications with consideration of the patients current medications, weight, and age.
- Don't order prescriptions online unless they're from a trustworthy pharmacy. Some websites sell counterfeit prescriptions and nonprescription drugs that could be dangerous.

Preventing Drug Abuse in Teens

Recreational drug use is a serious problem with teens and young adults. National studies show that a teen is more likely to have abused a prescription drug than an illegal street drug. In fact, every day in the U.S., 2,500 youth (12 to 17) abuse a prescription pain reliever for the first time. Tips to preventing drug abuse in teens include:

- Educate yourselves – drugfree.org has lots of support, tools, resources, and answers available.
- Discuss the dangers of prescription drugs. Just because a doctor prescribes them doesn't mean they are safe at all times for everyone.
- Set rules. Let your teen know that it's not okay to share medications with others – or to take drugs prescribed for others.
- Discuss the dangers of alcohol use with medications. Using alcohol with prescription medications can increase the risk of accidental overdose.
- Make sure your child isn't ordering drugs online. Some websites sell counterfeit and dangerous drugs that may not require a prescription.
- Properly dispose of medications. Don't leave unused or expired drugs around your home. Check the label or discuss with the pharmacy the best way to dispose of prescriptions drugs.

<http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2017/04/19/drug-overdose-9th-leading-cause-of-us-deaths.aspx>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/prescription-drug-abuse/basics/prevention/con-20032471>

<http://www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts/prescription-drugs.html>



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