

BODY AND SOUL:

MEADE COUNTY CATHOLIC HEALTH MINISTRY

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The Newest Drug Abuse Trend

The abuse of prescription drugs is a serious and growing public health problem in the United States. Currently, over 6 million Americans use a prescription drug not prescribed to them to obtain the feeling or high it causes. This represents about 20% of the population. The definition of prescription drug abuse is to take a medication that is not prescribed for you, or taking it for reasons or in doses other than as prescribed by a doctor. Prescription drugs have become the second most abused category of drugs in our country, following marijuana.

In 2000, 43% of hospital emergency room admissions for overdoses (around 500,000 people) happened because of misused prescription drugs. There is a misconception that prescription drugs are “safer” than illegal street drugs because they have been prescribed for someone by a physician. However, any drug can have side effects and can interact with other drugs

like alcohol. And all prescription drugs have the potential for addiction—we cannot predict who will get addicted or even die from abusing prescription medications.

Most people do not lock up their prescription medications or dispose of them when no longer needed. Our growing population of aging Baby Boomers and the elderly are prime candidate for abuse—when someone becomes used to taking a number of pills everyday to manage their

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Possible Signs of Prescription Drug Addiction:

- * Changes in routine habits
- * Withdrawal from friends and family
- * No longer participate in favorite activities
- * Constantly searching for ways to get money
- * Dramatic changes in appearance and hygiene
- * Inappropriate behaviors such as lying and stealing

Commonly Abused Prescription Drugs

There are 3 classes of medications that are commonly abused:

- * **OPIOIDS**—prescribed to treat pain (examples: OxyContin, Vicodin)
- * **CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM (CNS) DEPRESSANTS**—prescribed to treat anxiety and sleep disorders, commonly referred to as sedatives and tranquilizers (examples: Valium, Xanax)
- * **STIMULANTS**—prescribed to treat narcolepsy and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Examples: Ritalin, Adderall)

Check it out!

Have a great idea for a future newsletter? Let us know! We will feature a different health topic each month.

Ephesians 5: 15-17

Watch carefully then how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of the opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord.



health issues, it can become easy to take pain killers, sleep aids and other more addictive drugs. This also increases the risk of potentially fatal drug interactions. Online pharmacies can sometimes take advantage of this aspect of our culture. While most are legitimate, some do not verify prescriptions and make it easy for minors to obtain drugs over the internet.

So how can you stop potential abuse in your own home?

- * Keep medications in a locked container.

- * Take precautions when traveling with your medications.
- * Follow the directions and use the medication only as prescribed.
- * Keep track of your medication by routinely counting your pills.
- * Discard any remaining medication after completing treatment.

If you suspect that a loved one has a problem with prescription drugs, it is important to get the person help as soon as possible. Contact your physician for treatment options in your area.

Written by Melissa D. Phillips, Community Health Educator



Teens and Prescription Drugs

Youth aged 15-24 are the fast growing demographic to abuse prescription drugs. There are a few reasons that prescription drugs are so attractive to young people.

First, they are easily available. They can get them from friends or steal them from a family member's prescription. Second, they are inexpensive. If they borrow" from someone else's prescription, it doesn't cost them anything to get high. And third, there is not a stigma attached to taking pills like there is with illegal street drugs. Our society is used to taking pills as a quick fix to its problems.

It has been found that youth who use other drugs are more likely to abuse prescription drugs as well. Painkillers are the group of prescription drugs most abused by teens. Our young people need to be taught that using someone else's medication to get high, to lose weight or to build muscle is dangerous and illegal.

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the means for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an asceticism adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God's commandments, exercise of the moral virtues, and fidelity to prayer.

Kid's Corner



- * You guys know that taking medicine the right way can make you feel better.
- * Taking too much medicine or taking someone else's medicine can make you very sick.
- * Do not ever try to measure your own medicine.
- * If you find something that looks like candy, take it to an adult just to be safe.
- * Remind your parents to lock up all the medicines together.
- * Talk to your parents about ways to make your house safer. Kids have great ideas!