What can I do about this problem?

Think about your home. What prescription and over-the-counter drugs do you have? Where are they kept? Would you know if some were missing? The good news is that you can take steps immediately to limit access to these drugs and help keep your teen drug-free:

1. Safeguard all drugs at home. Monitor quantities and control access.
2. Set clear rules for teens about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider's advice and dosages.
3. Be a good role model by following these same rules with your own medicines.
4. Properly conceal and dispose of old or unused medicines in the trash.
5. Ask friends and family to safeguard their prescription drugs as well.

Talk to your teen about the dangers of abusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs. These are powerful drugs that, when misused, are just as dangerous as illegal street drugs. Tell your teen it's not worth the risk.

To learn more about teen prescription drug abuse, visit www.TheAntiDrug.com or call 1-800-788-2800 to request free materials. For information about a drug treatment center close to you, visit www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov or call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at the number listed above.

National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign
Office of National Drug Control Policy

What are the brand names of some of these drugs?

Painkillers:	Vicodin, Tylenol with Codeine, OxyContin, Percocet
Depressants:	Klonopin, Nembutal, Soma, Valium, Xanax
Stimulants:	Adderall, Concerta, Dexedrine, Ritalin
OTCs:	Coricidin HBP Cough and Cold, Robitussin, Vicks Formula 44 Cough Relief, and others

Prescription drugs provide benefits when used correctly under the care of a health provider. But when abused, they can be just as dangerous as illicit drugs.

Where are teens getting prescription and over-the-counter drugs?

Seventy percent of people age 12 and older who abuse prescription painkillers say they get them from relatives and friends. Others may abuse their own prescription medicine. Teens also report that these drugs are not hard to find. About 40 percent of 12th graders say that painkillers are fairly or very easy to get, and more than half say the same of stimulants.

How can I tell if my teen is abusing these drugs?

Some signs that your teen might be using prescription and/or over-the-counter drugs include constricted pupils, slurred speech, or flushed skin. Other signs and symptoms may vary, but parents should be alert to the following: personality changes, mood swings, irritability, excessive energy, sleepiness or avoiding sleep, sweating, loss of appetite, forgetfulness, or clumsiness.

Watch for signs around the house such as missing pills, unfamiliar pills, or empty cough and cold medicine bottles or packages. If your teen has a prescription, keep control of the bottle. Be alert to your teen running out of pills quickly, losing pills, or requesting refills.

Other signs might include secretiveness, loss of interest in personal appearance, borrowing money or having extra cash, skipping classes, or not doing well in school.

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Washington State Department of Social & Health Services
Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Washington State Alcohol/Drug Clearinghouse
6535 5th Place South. Seattle, WA 98108
Phone 206.725.9696 Fax 206.760.0589
http://clearinghouse.adhl.org
clearinghouse@adhl.org

Although illicit drug use by teens is declining, now there's a threat from the family medicine cabinet:

The abuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs

Parents and caregivers are the first line of defense in addressing this troubling trend

PARENTS.
THE ANTI-DRUG.

What's the problem?

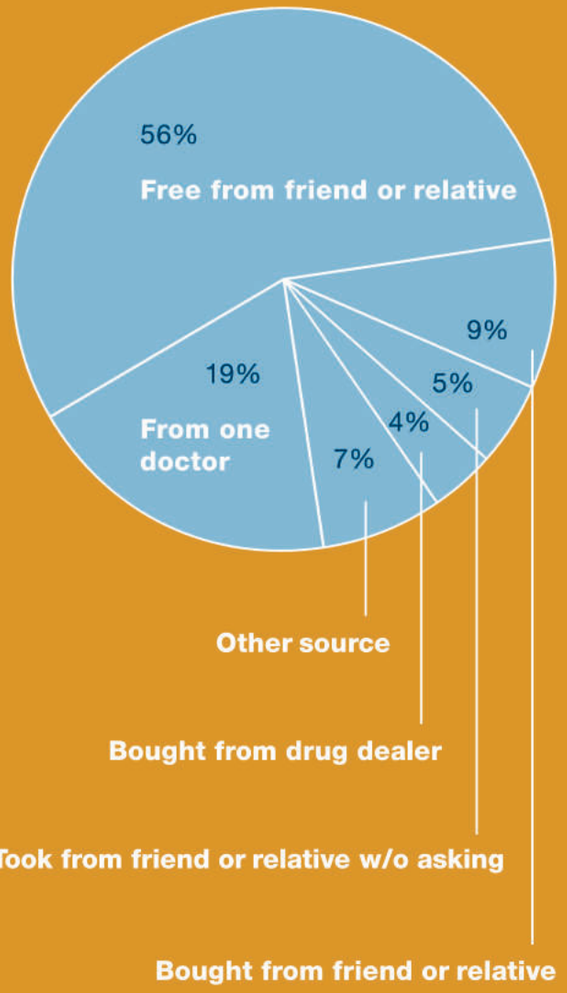
According to the *2008 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey*, one in every 10 students in grades 10 and 12 used a prescription pain medication to get high in the past 30 days.

Teens are abusing some prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs to get high. This includes **painkillers**, such as those drugs prescribed after surgery; **depressants**, such as sleeping pills or anti-anxiety drugs; and **stimulants**, such as those drugs prescribed for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Teens are also abusing over-the-counter drugs, such as cough and cold remedies.

Every day, 2,500 youth age 12 to 17 abuse a pain reliever for the very first time. 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. Among 12- and 13-year-olds, prescription drugs are their drug of choice.

Because these drugs are so readily available, teens who wouldn't otherwise touch illicit drugs might abuse prescription drugs. And not many parents are talking to them about it, even though teens report that parental disapproval is a powerful way to keep them away from drugs.

Source of Pain Relievers for Most Recent Nonmedical Use Among Past Year Users



70%

obtained from friend or relative

Source: SAMHSA, *2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (September 2007).

What are the dangers?

There are serious health risks. Emergency room visits involving prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse grew 21 percent from 2004 to 2005. A single large dose of prescription or over-the-counter painkillers or depressants can cause breathing difficulty that can lead to death. Stimulant abuse can lead to hostility or paranoia, or the potential for heart system failure or fatal seizures. Even in small doses, depressants and painkillers have subtle effects on motor skills, judgment, and ability to learn, which can increase the risk of injury.

The abuse of over-the-counter cough and cold remedies can cause blurred vision, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, coma, and even death. In 2004, nearly half of all emergency room visits resulting from abuse of cough or cold remedies were patients between the ages of 12 and 20.

Many teens report mixing prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, and alcohol. Using these drugs in combination can cause respiratory failure and death.

Many of these drugs can be addicting. Between 1995 and 2005, the number of treatment admissions for prescription painkillers increased by more than 300 percent. Teens who first abuse prescription drugs before age 16 also have a greater risk of drug dependence later in life.