



Talking to kids about prescription drug abuse

Author: Carrie Baum, School Nurse

As a parent you're concerned about your children's health and well-being. You teach them about crossing the street safely and about personal safety. You talk with them about the risks of using tobacco, alcohol, and other illegal drugs. But did you know that one of the fastest growing threats to youth today is the abuse of prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs? Did you know that nearly one in five teens nationally report intentionally abusing prescription drugs, and one in ten reports abusing cough medicine for recreational use?

Tips for dealing with prescription and OTC drugs

Preschool:

- Encourage health and healthy habits.
- Explain simply that medicine can be harmful if it's not taken the way it is supposed to be.
- Model healthy behavior, only take medications that are prescribed for you and only when needed.
- Teach children to never put something in their mouth if they do not know what it is.
- Teach children to only accept medicines from you or from an adult that you trust.
- Keep all medicines and vitamins out of reach.

When child is 5-8 years old include:

- If children need medication during the school day, they should speak to a school nurse or school official.

When child is 9-11 years old include:

- Practice with your child different ways of saying "no" when offered medicine by a friend.
- Establish clear rules and appropriate consequences regarding use and misuse of any medication.
- Remind children that abuse of medicine can be just as harmful as illegal drugs.
- Discuss the risk of taking medications and driving a car.

In every home, monitor prescription drugs and keep them locked up if necessary and out of the hands of your children and any other child that may come into your home.