



## TRAGIC MISTAKE

### Myra & Steve's story

Myra and her husband Steve had two teenage sons, Cole and Jackson. Jackson was the older son and Cole always followed whatever Jackson did. Myra's husband Steve was a construction worker and had been prescribed Oxycodone for severe back pain. Steve did not abuse his medicine; he always used it as directed by his doctor. Steve and Myra, however, did make one huge mistake with Steve's prescription. They stored the medication in the family medicine cabinet in the bathroom where it was accessible to their teenage sons.

One afternoon after school Jackson convinced Cole that they should each take some pills. He had heard from some friends that they were really fun and safe. Both boys took a couple pills, but Cole's body was not able to handle the high dosage and after a few minutes, he passed out. Once Myra and Steve got home from work it was already too late. Cole had died of an overdose.

## WARNING SIGNS

### How to Tell if a Kid's Abusing Drugs

What are the warning signs your teen may be abusing prescription drugs?

- Suspicious activity around the medicine cabinet, pilfering or looking through things they would not normally be in.
- They may be looking for prescription drugs in other parts of the house.
- They make excuses to break social engagements with regular friends and family to avoid showing symptoms of prescription drug abuse.
- Shows signs of extreme paranoia.
- Excessive sleeping or changes in sleeping patterns.
- Withdrawal symptoms, including insomnia, diarrhea and vomiting.

## STARTING A CONVERSATION

### Talking to Your Teen About the Dangers of Prescription Drugs

Statistics show that teens who know the dangers of prescription drugs are 50% less likely to start abusing prescription drugs. Set aside time today to talk to your teen about the dangers of prescription drugs.

- Discuss the dangers with them. Don't Lecture!
- Avoid Scare Tactics. Focus on more realistic consequences.
- Be honest with them. If you've used drugs in the past, explain why. If you haven't, explain to them how you handled the peer pressure.
- Talk about their goals and how prescription drugs can ruin this for them.
- Let them know they can always talk to you if they have questions.

# PRESCRIPTION DRUG STORAGE & DISPOSAL



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STAY SAFE SERIES

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## OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND



## WHAT ARE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS?

Prescription drugs can be very useful to individuals with chronic illnesses or pain. They help to relieve the symptoms of many diseases and help people in these situations lead a normal life. However, prescription drugs can be very addictive, especially when misused. Users can actually become dependent after just a few doses. They alter your consciousness and can cause painful withdrawal symptoms when you stop using. Many teens think that trying them once won't be a big deal, but some of those users end up sick, addicted, in the hospital or dead.

As a parent it is important to know how to properly store and dispose of these prescription drugs.

## USE AS DIRECTED

### Abusing Prescription Drugs

Many people may not realize that they may be abusing a prescription medication. Abuse of a prescription drug is....

- Using a medication that was not prescribed to you by a healthcare provider, whether or not the prescription was given to you by someone else or stolen.
- Using a prescription drug other than how it was intended to be taken. This would include crushing and snorting or injecting a prescription drug that was not intended to be administered in such a way.
- Taking more than the recommended dose of a medication.

More often though, the biggest threat comes from teens getting into their parent's medicine cabinets and taking these medications to get high, or simply out of curiosity. The latest generation of youth has been labeled "Generation Rx" by the media because of the growing epidemic of prescription drug abuse. One in three teens between the ages of 12 and 18 have admitted to abusing a prescription drug at some point in their lifetime. With these numbers it is hard to ignore this mounting problem among today's youth.



## PROPERLY STORING PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

It is important that an adult who is prescribed a medication know how to properly use and store their medication so that it does not fall into the wrong hands. When a child is prescribed medication for a sickness, it's also important to properly store those drugs as well.

- Only use your medication as directed by a healthcare professional.
- If you begin to experience any strange symptoms, contact your doctor immediately.
- All medications should be kept out of site in a remote place of the house only you know about. Your medication should not even be administered in front of your teen. (Teens can be resourceful when looking for prescription drugs and may keep tabs on when you take your medicine to find out where you are storing it).
- If you have teens in your house, it is strongly advised that prescription drugs be locked away.
- Never give your prescription to anyone else to use.

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

### Possible Effects of Improper Storage

Many people feel that having their prescription medications out in the open is no big deal and that no harm can be done from storing their medicine in the medicine cabinet or on the counter. However, prescription drugs can be very dangerous if they fall into the wrong hands. If drugs are left out they can be accidentally ingested by pets or children which can be fatal in many cases.

Many teens take prescription drug abuse to even more serious extremes when they participate in "pharm" parties. They go "pharming" for prescriptions drugs in their parents or relative's medicine cabinets. They then meet at a party, or gathering, and exchange these drugs and may even take more than one type of prescription drug at a time. Oftentimes these teens place all the "pharmed" drugs in a bowl and swallow a handful, not even knowing what they are taking. Many times this recreation results in hospitalization or even death.



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## PROPER DISPOSAL OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

- First, always take a marker and completely black out the label on the bottle. It is important that no personal information be visible.
- If your prescription is not a narcotic it may be okay to dispose of the medication in the trash. Check the label or drug information sheet to be sure. Inhalers are the exception to this rule and should be turned in to a local pharmacy rather than be thrown in the trash.
- For prescriptions that are considered narcotics, you may turn in any unused medication to your local pharmacy or a local drug disposal drive. Do not flush any such medication down the drain or toilet.
- Never let any medication you have disposed of be visible in your trash, as this can prompt people who are addicted to prescription drugs to come looking for them in your home.
- If you are unsure, ask your pharmacist or doctor how to dispose of a certain medication.

