

# Why You Should Be Concerned

**FACT:** 1.5 million American kids have reported they have misused prescription or over-the-counter drugs.

**FACT:** According to the Federal Drug Abuse Warning Network, emergency room visits due to misuse of prescription drugs are greater than the number of visits due to marijuana and heroin use combined.

Prescription drug misuse is the use of prescription medication in a manner that is not prescribed by a health care practitioner. This includes using someone else's prescription or using your own prescription in a way not directed by your doctor.

Most people take prescription medication responsibly under a doctor's care. However, there has been a steady increase in the non-medical use of these medications, especially by teenagers. Part of the problem is the availability of medications (over-the-counter and prescription) in the family medicine cabinet which can provide easy access for children, adults, elderly and visitors. People often mistakenly believe that these medications are safe because they are approved by the FDA and prescribed by a physician. Non-medical use of certain prescription drugs can lead to addiction.



**1-877-8-HOPENY**

Find Help for **1-877-846-7369**  
Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, Problem Gambling



**OASAS**  
Improving Lives.

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Commissioner  
Arlene González-Sánchez, M.S., L.M.S.W.

## Is Your Child Misusing Prescription Drugs or Over-the-Counter Medications?

### Signs and Symptoms of Use



## What You Can Do

### Educate Yourself

Be aware and keep track of the medications in your home. Have open conversations about appropriate versus inappropriate use of medication. Inform your friends and family that misusing medications can be just as dangerous as using illegal drugs. A medicine cabinet inventory is available online for your use at [www.oasas.state.ny.us/publications](http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/publications).

Ask your health care provider if any medications prescribed for your family have potential for misuse.

### Familiarize yourself with the warning signs of prescription and over-the-counter drug misuse

Warning signs can be both behavioral and physical, and may include withdrawal from normal activities, irritability, unusual requests for money, unexplained changes in friends and frequent nasal or sinus infections. The checklist provided can help identify signs for concern.

### Help is Available

If you feel that your child, or someone you know, has a problem with alcohol, substance use or prescription and over-the-counter drug use, help is available 24 hours/ 7 days. Find help by calling 1-877-8-HOPENY (1-877-846-7369). All calls are confidential.



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# Checklist

## Physical Signs

- Bloodshot eyes
- Slurred or agitated speech
- Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain
- Frequent illnesses
- Accidents and/or injuries
- Skin abrasions/bruises
- Neglected appearance/poor hygiene
- Slowed or staggering walk, poor coordination



## Behavioral Signs

- Change in eating and/or sleeping patterns
- Lie, cover up or hide use
- Sense that the person will “do anything” to use again, regardless of consequences
- Loss of control or choice over use (drug-seeking behavior)
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Emotional instability
- Hyperactive or hyper-aggressive behavior
- Depression
- Failure to fulfill responsibilities at school or work
- Miss or skip school or work
- Complaints from teachers or co-workers
- Reports of intoxication at school or work
- Secretive behavior, phone calls
- Difficulty in paying attention
- Forgetfulness
- Paranoia
- Avoid eye contact
- Silliness or giddiness
- Locked bedroom doors
- Going out every night
- Change in friends or peer group
- Change in clothing or appearance
- Prescription medicine missing
- Money and/or valuables missing
- Disappear for long periods of time
- Run away
- Unusual containers or wrappers
- Decline in participation at home
- Diminished interest in hobbies, sports or favorite activities
- Irritability, overreacting to mild criticism or avoiding family contact
- Lack of appreciation for values that used to be important
- Shoplifting, truancy, DUI, disorderly conduct, or other trouble with the law
- Use of street or drug language
- Possession of drug paraphernalia

**Note:** While the behaviors on this checklist may indicate a drug problem, some may also reflect normal teenage behavior. Experts believe that a substance problem is more likely if you notice several of these signs at the same time, if they occur suddenly or are extreme in nature.