TAKE ACTION

Use these tips to talk with your child:

- Plan to have many short talks;
- Choose informal times to have the conversations, such as in the car or during dinner;
- Continue talking as they get older;
- Clearly state what you expect regarding drug use;
- Create family rules together, such as expectations when hanging out with friends; and
- Let them know you are always there for them.

Exit Plan
Talk to your children about having an “exit plan” if they are offered prescription pain relievers that are not theirs. Peer pressure can be powerful among youths, and having a plan to avoid drug misuse can help children make smart choices. Talk with your children about what they would do if faced with a decision about drugs, such as texting a code word to a family member. Be sure to practice the exit plan in a safe environment.

Safe Storage and Disposal
It is important to properly store and dispose of medication. For more information about how to safely store or dispose of your family’s medicine, read Safe Storage of Prescription Medications9 or Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know.10

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OPIOIDS CAN BE PRESCRIBED FOR PAIN

Opioids are a group of drugs that includes prescription pain medications and illegal drugs like heroin. The most common pain medications involved in prescription opioid overdoses include drugs such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, and morphine.1

After marijuana and alcohol, prescription drugs are the most commonly misused substances by Americans age 14 and older.2 Misuse can be described as taking someone else’s medicine, taking a medicine in a way other than prescribed, taking a medicine to get high, and/or mixing medicine with other substances.

Start talking to your children early to ensure they understand what opioids are and the risks of misusing prescription medication.

PRESCRIPTION OPIOID MISUSE

Children who take opioid pain medication that is not prescribed to them—even just one time—can suffer serious illness or death. Between 2004 and 2005, about 71,000 children under age 18 went to emergency rooms because they took medicines while their parent or caregiver wasn’t looking.

3 Taking prescription pain medications can have serious consequences, including:
• Allergic reactions;
• Breathing problems;
• Coma;
• Permanent brain damage; and/or
• Death.

Preemies should also talk with their children about the dangers of taking prescription pain relievers that don’t belong to them. It is unsafe and illegal to take someone else’s prescription medication, even if the drug was prescribed to someone your child knows. Doctors prescribe different dosages based on a person’s age and size, and mixing or taking the wrong strength can be deadly. Studies show that 53 percent of people ages 12 or older obtained prescription pain medication for nonmedical use from a friend or relative.6

Talk to your children about the dangers of taking prescription pain relievers that don’t belong to them.

AREN’T PRESCRIPTION PAIN MEDICATIONS ADDICTING?

Parents should also talk with their children about how addiction is a disease and misusing medications can have major, life-threatening consequences. Research suggests that one of the most important factors when a child is growing up is a strong, open relationship with a parent. Though it may not seem like it, children really hear your concerns, and it is important that you discuss the risks of using pain medications with them.

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