

Health Alert

What Parents and Teachers Can Do To Counter Teen Prescription Drug Abuse

(NAPSA)—Many parents used to fear that their children would abuse or become addicted to illegal “street drugs” like marijuana or cocaine. But today, millions of teenagers are turning to their parents’ medicine cabinets to get high on prescription medications, such as pain relievers, anti-anxiety pills and treatments for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

Statistics confirm that teen prescription drug abuse is a serious and growing problem in the United States. One in five high school students has taken a prescription drug that was not prescribed for them by a doctor, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Every day, 2,500 young people use a prescription pain reliever to get high for the first time.

A Partnership For Action

To address America’s problem of teen prescription drug abuse, addiction expert and television personality Dr. Drew Pinsky is taking part in the Smart Moves, Smart Choices educational program—a joint initiative of the National Association of School Nurses and PriCara, Division of Ortho-McNeil-Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Dr. Pinsky, known to his readers and viewers as “Dr. Drew,” is a New York Times bestselling author and host of “Celebrity Rehab” and “Sober House.”

Smart Moves, Smart Choices is a national, school-based program for middle and high school students designed to educate teens, parents and educators about the risks of abusing prescription medicines. The program provides



A new program can educate parents, teens and educators about the risks of prescription drug abuse.

them with tools to take action, including a new Web site—www.SmartMovesSmartChoices.org.

Board certified in internal and addiction medicine, Dr. Drew understands the dangers and consequences of teens abusing prescription medications.

“When used as prescribed by a doctor for a legitimate medical reason, prescription medicines can provide time-honored benefits,” says Dr. Drew. “But many teens do not realize that abusing prescription medications that were not prescribed for them—or mixing prescription medications with alcohol—can cause serious health consequences, and possibly death, even if you do it just once,” Dr. Drew adds.

A Potentially Fatal Mistake

While any drug abuse—illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter—is highly unsafe, 41 percent of teens still mistakenly believe that abusing prescription drugs to get high is safer than taking illegal drugs, like cocaine or heroin.

“Parents should try to be aware and monitor their teens’ access to prescription drugs. I encourage parents to take control and

transform their medicine cabinets from danger zones into safe zones,” says Dr. Drew.

Research shows that 65 percent of teens that have abused prescription pain relievers say they got them from friends and relatives. Dr. Drew advises parents to remind relatives, especially grandparents, to keep all prescription medications out of reach of teens and in a safe and locked location or container.

According to Dr. Drew, parents can be more influential than they realize and can safeguard their teens by:

- Taking all prescription medications out of the medicine cabinet and locking them in a safe location.

- Disposing of all unused or expired prescription medications.

- Learning to recognize the signs of abuse.

- Starting an ongoing dialogue with your teenager about prescription drug abuse.

- Seeking credible resources for help, such as the Smart Moves, Smart Choices Web site.

SmartMovesSmartChoices.org features an interactive quiz, myth-busting facts, take-action tips and educational videos featuring Dr. Drew. Also available are materials that enable educators and school nurses to teach students about this topic in their own schools, including lesson plans and a school assembly tool kit.

For More Information

To learn more about the Smart Moves, Smart Choices program and to access the videos and tool kit materials, visit www.SmartMovesSmartChoices.org.