



Rise In ADHD Medication Abuse

A recent study by researchers from Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, evaluating the 1998-2005 data from the American Association of Poison Control Center, shows an alarming increase in the abuse of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medication in teens. The study involved the number of calls made to poison control centers for 13-19 year olds, in which the reason was intentional abuse or misuse of prescription ADHD medication.



Calls related to teenaged victims of prescription ADHD medication abuse rose 76%, which is faster than calls for victims of general and teen substance abuse. Overall, 42% of teens involved had moderate to severe side-effects and most ended up getting emergency-room treatment. Four deaths were among the cases evaluated.

Kids taking ADHD drugs to get high or increase alertness may not realize that misuse can cause serious, sometimes life-threatening symptoms, including agitation, rapid heartbeat and extremely high blood pressure. The number of teen abusers who have bad side effects may actually be higher because many of the cases don't result in calls to poison control centers.

Teens mistakenly think that prescription drugs are safer and less addictive than street drugs. They experiment with them because they think they will help them have more fun, lose weight, fit in, or study more effectively. One teen overheard her parents talking about how her brother's ADHD medicine was making him less hungry. Because she was worried about her weight, she started sneaking one of her brother's pills every few days. To prevent her parents from finding out, she asked a friend to give her some of his ADHD medicine as well. Sixty-one percent of teens say prescription drugs are easier to get than any other drug. They get them from friends at school and are readily available in the bathroom or other cabinets at home. Teens say the bathroom medicine cabinet is the first place they look.

Parents need to keep a very close eye on medications. They should be kept in a safe location, even keeping them locked up, experts say.

(Sources: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org>, 08-24-09; <http://kidshealth.org>, 08-25-09; www.connectwithkids.com, 08-25-09)

The Positive Power of Mentoring

If you've ever thought about becoming a mentor for a lonely child, a new study might help you get motivated: kids with a mentor end up years later with more education, more money, and a better relationship with friends and family.



Ten-year old Tyrone used to be shy and rarely played with other kids his age. "And I didn't like to smile because of my teeth, but now that I got a big brother, we go out in public a lot, I smile a lot and I don't care what anybody says about my teeth, so I smile," he says.

A study by Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America reports that confidence is just one of the benefits from having a mentor.

Experts say mentors can even help kids who have good role models in mom and dad. "The child needs someone that's special to them. It's someone that they can talk to sometimes when they can't talk to their parent," says Janice McKenzie-Crayton of Big Brothers Big Sisters.

But, before signing off on any mentor, parents need to ask questions to make sure the mentor is right for their child. "The parent ought to be told the likes and dislikes of the volunteer, the background of the volunteer, what the volunteer's involved with, what work they do, etc.," McKenzie-Crayton says.

(Source: www.connectwithkids.com, 07-08-09)



Teen Dating Violence

Many times, teen feel so overpowered and controlled in abusive relationships that they can't leave. It takes support from friends and family to help.

Amanda Kramer was no different. Her then-boyfriend was jealous and controlling. He told her if she ever left him, he would kill himself. She didn't want to see him in pain. "I told him, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry' and he told me everything was my fault and that everything was never gonna be okay - but as long as we were together he wouldn't kill himself. And so I went back." Amanda was finally able to break free. "Just let it go," she says. "If you keep answering the phone calls, you're only making it available to him. You're only allowing him to yell at you and to scream at you. I stopped answering his phone calls, I deleted every single message that he sent me, emails, IM's - blocked them, took his number out of my phone and everything stopped. Months later it stopped. It finally stopped."

Experts say this cycle of threats and violence is hard to break. Many times the teens involved are in denial. "It's very important, though," explains domestic violence specialist, Kim Frndak, "that they have facts and information about this issue." An estimated one in three teens will be in an abusive relationship; one in four girls will be raped or sexually assaulted. And the victims don't always know that the abuse is not their fault. "It's very, very important to say, 'I'm concerned for your safety, you're not alone, you're not the only person dealing with this kind of thing, and you don't deserve to be treated like this'," explains Frndak.

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control defines 'dating violence' very specifically:

Dating Violence: "The perpetration or threat of an act of violence by at least one member of an unmarried couple on the other member within the context of dating or courtship. This violence encompasses any form of sexual assault, physical violence, and verbal or emotional abuse."

Tips for Parents

How can you tell if your teenager may be suffering from dating violence? Is your child involved with someone who:

- Is overly possessive and demonstrating a real need to control?
- Is jealous to the extreme point where it become an obsession?
- Is into controlling your child's everyday events?
- Is prone to violent outbursts?
- Is a person who has a history of poor relationships?
- Is infringing upon your child's freedom to make choices for himself/herself?
- Is limiting the time your child spends with other people?
- Is using external pressure to influence decision making?
- Is into passing blame and denying their own mistakes?
- Is in the habit of using put downs or playing mind games?
- Is not a person who can be disagreed with easily?
- Is encouraging your child to keep secrets?
- Is causing your child to become more withdrawn?



Tips for Teens in a Violent Relationship

- Tell your parents, a friend, a counselor, a clergyman, or someone else whom you trust and who can help.
- The more isolated you are from friends and family, the more control the abuser has over you.
- Alert the school counselor or security officer. Keep a daily log of the abuse.
- Do not meet your partner alone.
- Do not let him or her in your home or car when you are alone.
- Avoid being alone at school, your job, on the way to and from places.
- Tell someone where you are going and when you plan to be back.
- Plan and rehearse what you would do if your partner became abusive.

(Source: www.connectwithkids.org, 04-15-09)