

## OVERVIEW

**Prescription drug abuse** is a fast-growing problem in our country, especially among young people.

Children have more access to prescription drugs than ever. The two main sources for drugs are parents' medicine cabinets and the internet. In the case of the latter, many children are simply hopping online and visiting one of the thousands of illicit web-based pharmacies where obtaining prescription drugs is as easy as providing a credit card.

Because different age groups require different advice, here are some important 'talking points' for discussion with children of all ages.

## PRESCHOOLERS

**Tell your children** to never put anything in their mouths unless they know what it is.

Explain to them that medicines are made to help us feel better, but can hurt us if not taken correctly. To illustrate this point, show them the instructions on a prescription bottle.

Explain the importance of taking good care of our bodies – eating well, exercising, and getting the right amount of sleep.

It is also a good idea to secure all medication and properly dispose of unused and expired medication to prevent accidental poisoning.

## 5-8 YEAR OLDS

**Tell your children** that only adults should handle medications. Just because a prescription drug is in the family's medicine cabinet doesn't mean it is safe for them to take.

Caution them to never take medicine or eat candy given by someone other than a parent or a trusted individual the parent has given permission to (a nurse, teacher, grandparent, etc.)

Let your child know that medicine is not the only way to feel better when they are sick. Emphasize that rest and a healthy diet can also help.

## 9-11 YEAR OLDS

**Learn about** the effects of various prescription drugs and then share that information with your child.

Stress that taking some drugs in the wrong way can result in serious illness or death.

Role-play with your children and teach refusal skills to help them avoid risky behaviors.

Establish specific rules and consequences with your children to dissuade them from engaging in any drug-related activities, including abusing prescription drugs.

## 12-14 YEAR OLDS

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**Graphically describe** some of the more harmful and distasteful things that can happen to an individual who abuses prescription drugs (vomiting, sexual side effects, etc.)

Explain to them that there are some medications, even though prescribed by doctors, that can result in serious illness or death if taken in the wrong way.

Tell your children that drugs can ruin their future and keep them from achieving their goals and dreams.

## 15-17 YEAR OLDS

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**Reinforce the message** that drugs of any kind can ruin their future, making the message specific to college and career goals.

Research the legal ramifications of trading or selling prescription drugs, then clearly explain the criminal consequences to your children.

At this age, and perhaps even younger, it is a good idea to inventory all the prescription drugs you have in your home. Remove or lock-up any that may have the potential to be used in an illicit manner.

Keep close tabs on your children's internet usage by watching for visits to online pharmacy or drug-culture sites.

**East Hampton Prevention Partnership** is dedicated to reducing substance abuse among young people. Our mission is to foster a culture that values the well-being of East Hampton's youth. We strive to instill self-acceptance, self-confidence and goal-setting to promote healthy choices. In collaboration with community stakeholders, we offer educational programs and outreach initiatives.



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How to Talk with  
Your Children About  
**PRESCRIPTION  
DRUGS**

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