

LOCK UP YOUR MEDS DAY - OCTOBER 27, 2009

We are a society that looks to medications to cure our pains, aches and illnesses. There are pills for everything and usually many pills for one thing. There is no question we should be grateful for these medications that relieve our stresses, and pains and cure our sicknesses. Medications, when used as prescribed are powerful and effective. A doctor takes into consideration many factors when prescribing a drug or suggesting an over-the-counter medication, including the illness, age, sex, and general health of the individual.

When medications are self-prescribed or taken without the direction of a doctor or pharmacist, serious problems can be the result. Taking a medication-prescribed drug or over-the-counter- for non medical purposes is, without question, dangerous!

Non medical usage of medications is the fastest growing drug abuse problem in our country at this time.

BE SAFE CHECKLIST

- ✓ Keep medications locked-up.
- ✓ Monitor dosages.
- ✓ Keep track of the amount of pills in a bottle.
- ✓ Do not share medications.
- ✓ Follow directions when taking any medication.
- ✓ Do not drink alcohol with medications unless approved by your doctor.
- ✓ Discuss the dangers of misuse of drugs.



FAST FACTS

Misuse defined: Any intentional use of a medication not prescribed for a particular individual or- medications used that are expired; or-medications taken in a way not prescribed by a doctor. Any non-medical use.

An estimated 1.5 million youths ages 12 to 17 (an average of more than 4,000 per day) used a drug other than alcohol for the first time in the past year. (National Survey on Drug Use and Health-2007)

Around 50% of youths who reported misusing prescription stimulants, tranquilizers or sedatives in the past year said that they most recently obtained the medication for free from friends or family. 33% of youth who reported the misuse of prescription opioids also obtained them for free from friends or family.

From :Center For Substance Abuse Research; U of Maryland

Some medications cause sleepiness, blurred vision, dizziness, fainting, nausea, excitability, inability to pay attention and/or slowed movements. Individuals taking drugs like this **SHOULD NOT GET BEHIND THE WHEEL OF A CAR!**

According to a study by the Partnership for a Drug Free America: roughly 1 in 5 teens abused Vicodin; roughly 1 in 10 teens abused OxyContin; roughly 1 in 10 teens has tried Ritalin and/or Adderall without a prescription; roughly 1 in 11 teens has abused over-the-counter cough medicines.

VALLEY YOUTH & PRESCRIPTION PILLS

According to VSAAC's 2007 Survey of Student Needs:

21.3% of grade 7 students, 21.5% of grade 9 students and 24.5 % of grade 11 students abused over-the-counter medications to get high.

Prescription medications abuse by grade 11 students

8.7 % abused stimulants like Ritalin and Aderall

6.3% abused antidepressants like Prozac and Paxil

9.7% abused pain killers like OxyContin and Oxycodone

6.9% abused sedatives or anti-anxiety drugs like valium, Ativan, Zanax, and Librium

Survey sample size

Grade 7 > 1028; Grade 9 > 1077; Grade 11 > 860

A Recent report from the National Drug Intelligence Center identifies heroin as a drug on the rise again. The new England States are not immune. Within the past few months two CT police departments have reported an increase in heroin use. One reason is the fact that painkiller addicts are turning to heroin use because it (heroin) is cheap and accessible. Individuals who become addicted to their prescription medications often are not able to get refills or can not afford continued purchase of prescription drugs— either legally or illegally. Heroin fills the need. A dose of heroin can cost as little as \$5 or \$10.

Painkiller/heroin addicts come in all ages. Addiction does not distinguish between young and old, rich or poor, educated or not educated.

VSAAC Raises Awareness

VSAAC has, for more than ten years, provided educational programs to all valley residents. During the past year, we have focused on raising awareness about the problems related to the use and misuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications. Individuals of all ages are becoming dependent on prescription medications and 70% of all people who abuse these medications get them from friends and or relatives.

One of our primary targets has been the senior population.

Why seniors? Half of all deaths and a third of hospitalizations due to drug reactions involve individuals over the age of 60; every year an estimated 32,000 older people suffer hip fractures during drug induced slips and falls; at least 160,000 older adults experience problems with memory or thinking brought on or made worse by medications.

Not only have we provided education for seniors, but we have sponsored “take back” programs. Take Back programs allow individuals to clear out medications that are no longer used, expired or medications from individuals who have died.

The three pilot programs in Seymour proved so successful that VSAAC has been called upon to coordinate programs in many other area communities.

VSAAC works with police departments and the state DEP. The Police are present during the take back period . They then take the drugs to be destroyed. The DEP receives a list of the meds at the completion of the program. To date VSAAC has taken back over 40,000 pills worth many thousands of dollars.

The take back program prevents medications from contaminating our water supply, prevents the possibility of robbery by friends or family, prevents seniors from using old medications and prevents individuals from sharing medications.