

## How you can use the Medicine Cabinet Inventory:

- List all prescriptions, including over-the-counter medications.
- Include the date of purchase and quantity.
- Include recommended dosage. Never increase or decrease doses without talking to your doctor.
- Keep all medications out of reach of all young children and adolescents.
- To properly dispose of unused or expired medications, mix them with used cat litter, coffee grounds, or sawdust to make them less appealing before throwing them in the garbage.

## Why You Should Be Concerned

**FACT:** 1.5 million American kids have reported they have abused prescription drugs.

**FACT:** According to the Federal Drug Abuse Warning Network, emergency room visits due to abuse of prescription drugs are greater than the number of visits due to abuse of marijuana and heroin combined.

**FACT:** Studies report that older persons regularly consume on average between two and six prescription medications and between one and three over-the-counter medications. An estimated one in five older Americans (19 percent) may be affected by combined difficulties with alcohol and medication misuse.

Prescription drug abuse is the use of prescription medication in a manner that is not prescribed by a healthcare practitioner. This includes using someone else's prescription or using your own prescription in a way not directed by your doctor.

Most people take prescription medication responsibly under a doctor's care. However, there has been a steady increase in the non-medical use of these medications, especially by teenagers. Part of the problem is the availability of medications (over-the-counter and prescription) in the family medicine cabinet which can provide easy access to children, adults, elderly and visitors. People often mistakenly believe that these medications are safe because they are approved by the FDA and prescribed by a physician. Nonmedical use of certain prescription drugs can lead to addiction.

## What You Can Do

### Educate Yourself

- Be aware of the medications in your home. Have open conversations about appropriate versus inappropriate use of medication. Inform your friends and family that abusing medications can be just as dangerous as using illegal drugs.
- Ask your healthcare provider if any medications prescribed for your family have a potential for abuse.
- Be familiar with the warning signs of prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse. Warning signs can be both behavioral and physical, and may include withdrawal from normal activities, irritability, unusual requests for money, unexplained changes in friends and frequent nasal or sinus infections.

### Communicate with Your Family

- Remind seniors in your home that many medications do not mix well with alcohol or other medications, including herbal remedies.
- Teach your teens and younger children to respect medicines. Medicines are important tools in healthcare but they must be used according to directions.
- Set clear expectations with your teenagers and let them know that under no circumstances should they ever take medications without your knowledge.

If you suspect a problem in your home, call the **OASAS Helpline at 1-800-522-5353.**



*Addiction Services for Prevention, Treatment, Recovery*

**New York State Office of Alcoholism  
and Substance Abuse Services**

**[www.oasas.state.ny.us](http://www.oasas.state.ny.us)**

General information: **518.473.3460**

*Karen M. Carpenter-Palumbo, Commissioner*

# Is Your Medicine Cabinet Safe?

## Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medicine Abuse

### A Medicine Cabinet Inventory



**FACT:** An estimated 20 percent of people in the United States (48 million people ages 12 and older) have used prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons.

