

Preventing Prescription Drug Abuse

Think about your home. What prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs do you have? Where are they kept? Would you know if some were missing? The good news is that you can take steps immediately to limit access to these drugs and help keep your teen drug-free:

- Safeguard all prescription medications in the household. Remove them from the medicine cabinet and place them out of reach of children and teens. Take note of how many pills are in a bottle or pill packet, and keep track of refills. This goes for your own medication, as well as for your teen and other members of your household.
- When a family member receives a prescription, ask the doctor or pharmacist if the medication has the potential for abuse. Keep control of all medications.
- If your child must take a prescription during school hours, arrange for them to receive it from the school nurse. Make sure that all unused medication is returned to you.
- Prescription medications should only be used under the supervision of a doctor. Under no circumstance is it safe to use someone else's prescription drug. Avoid sharing your drugs and always **follow your medical provider's instructions**.
- Unneeded prescription drugs should be **hidden and thrown away in the trash**. So that teens or others don't take them out of the trash, you can mix them with an undesirable substance (like used coffee grounds or kitty litter) and put the mixture in an empty can or bag. Unless the directions say otherwise, do NOT flush medications down the drain or toilet because the chemicals can pollute the water supply. Also, remove any personal, identifiable information from prescription bottles or pill packages before you throw them away.

Communication with teens can be challenging. It is important to remain clear and consistent regarding your rules about alcohol and drug use and to reward your child when they are doing well.

- If you see changes in your relationship that make you sense that something is wrong, take action. You may want to talk to your child to share your concern, or contact one of the listed resources on the Monmouth County Resource guide for more information.
- Guides are available to help parents make the most of the powerful impact they have on their children and teens.
- Be available for your child, and remain open should they approach you to discuss alcohol and other drug use.