

PARTNERSHIP FOR A DRUG-FREE AMERICA®
KEY FINDINGS OF:
2005 PARTNERSHIP ATTITUDE TRACKING STUDY
on TEEN DRUG ABUSE

“Generation Rx: A Culture of Pharming Takes Root”

Alarming statistics from the Partnership’s national survey confirm that intentionally abusing prescription (Rx) and over-the-counter (OTC) medications to get high are now entrenched behaviors in today’s teen population.

Key Findings:

- Abuse of Rx/OTC medicines is now so prevalent it is **“normalized”** among teens.
 - *Nearly one in five teens (19 percent, or 4.5 million) report abusing prescription medications to get high; and,*
 - *One in 10 (10 percent, or 2.4 million) report abusing cough medicine to get high.*
- Far too many teens have a **false sense of security** about the abuse of Rx/OTC medicines:
 - *Two in five teens (40 percent, or 9.4 million) agree that Rx medicines, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor, are much safer to use than illegal drugs;*
 - *Nearly one-third of teens (31 percent, or 7.3 million) believe there’s “nothing wrong” with using Rx medicines without a prescription “once in a while;”*
 - *Nearly three out of 10 teens (29 percent, or 6.8 million) believe prescription pain relievers – even if not prescribed by a doctor – are not addictive; and,*
 - *More than half of teens (55 percent, or 13 million) don’t agree strongly that using cough medicines to get high is risky.*
- With the majority of teens (56 percent, or 13.4 million) agreeing that Rx medicines are easier to get than illegal drugs, teens see these substances as **readily available highs**.

When asked why teens would abuse prescription pain relievers:

- *More than three in of five (62 percent, or 14.6 million) say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from parents' medicine cabinets;*
- *Half of teens (50 percent, or 11.9 million) say prescription pain relievers are easy to get through other people's prescriptions; and,*
- *More than half of teens (52 percent, or 12.3 million) say prescription pain relievers are "available everywhere."*
- Educating parents is crucial to helping prevent/intervene with this problem – and educated **parents must get through to their kids:**
 - *Kids who learn a lot about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs, but,*
 - *Nine in 10 parents of teens (92 percent or 22 million) say they have talked to their teen about the dangers of drugs, yet fewer than one-third of teens (31 percent or 7.4 million) say they "learn a lot about the risks of drugs" from their parents.*

Troubling Trends:

- Pharming - Kids "getting high" abusing Rx or OTC drugs;
- It has never been easier to get high - Internet accessibility and loose e-commerce enforcement further enable easy acquisition;
- Parents do not understand the behavior of intentionally abusing medicine to get high;
- Parents are not discussing the risks of abuse of prescription and/or non-prescription cough medicine with their children;
- Three out of five parents report discussing marijuana "a lot" with their children, but only one third of parents report discussing the risks of using prescription medicines or non-prescription cold or cough medicine to get high.

Main Substances of Concern:

- Prescription (Rx) drugs (pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, sedatives)
- OTC drugs (antitussives, CNS stimulants, antihistamines)
- Inhalants (inhaled fumes)
- Methamphetamine (stimulant)