

## 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 medications out of reach from 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:** 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:** Among persons ages 12 or older who used pain relievers nonmedically in the past year, an estimated 70% obtained them from a friend or relative. (NSDUH 2011)

**FACT:** In 2011, nonmedical use of prescription drugs among youth and young adults ages 12 - 25 was the second most prevalent illicit drug use category, with marijuana being first. (NSDUH 2011)

One of the most striking aspects of the misuse of prescription medications has been the increase in painkiller abuse, which can lead to heroin use. Prescription drug abuse is the use of prescription medication in a manner that is not prescribed by a health care 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 nonmedical 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 for children, adults, elderly and visitors. People often mistakenly believe 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 health care 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 family members 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 health care, 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.

Find help and hope for alcoholism, drug abuse or problem gambling, Call or Text:

**1-877-8-HOPENY**

1-877-846-7369

Text: HOPENY (467369)



Office of Alcoholism and  
Substance Abuse Services

[oasas.ny.gov](http://oasas.ny.gov) | [combatheroin.ny.gov](http://combatheroin.ny.gov)

General information: 518-473-3460  
Commissioner Arlene González Sánchez, M.S., L.M.S.W.



Office of Alcoholism and  
Substance Abuse Services

# Is Your Medicine Cabinet Safe?

## A Medicine Cabinet Inventory



Prescription and  
**Over-the-Counter**  
Medicine Abuse

