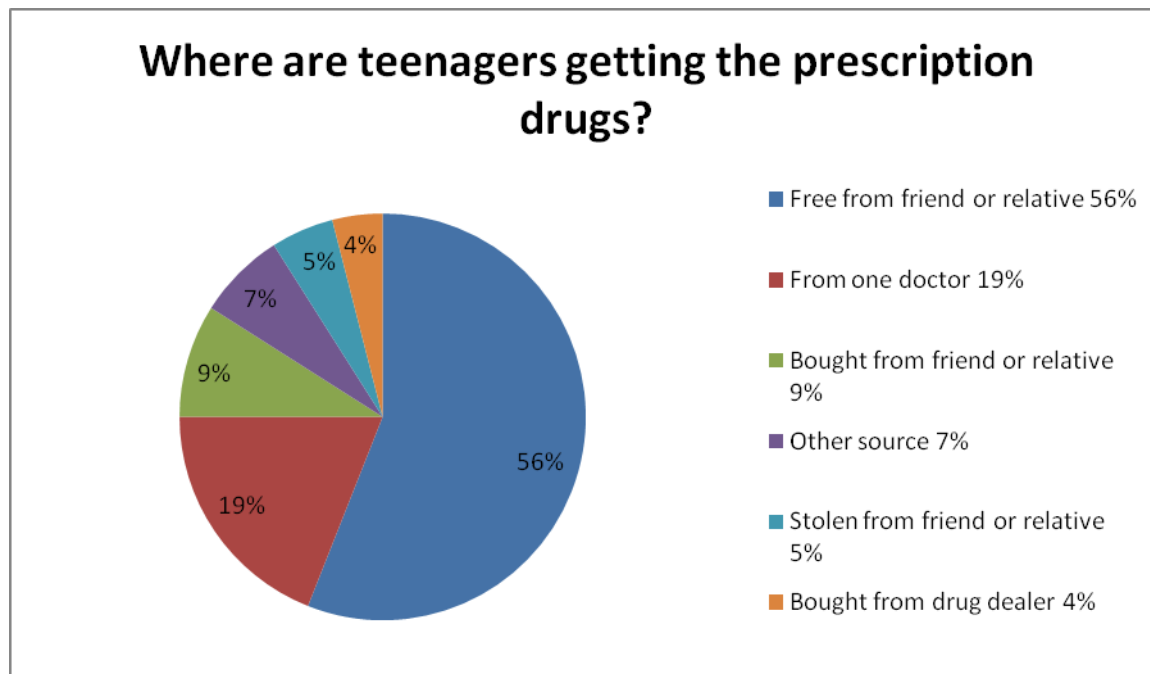


## Join us in helping prevent teen prescription abuse

While youth drug use has declined overall, the abuse of prescription drugs – such as pain relievers, depressants, and stimulants – is on the rise. There are more new abusers, 12 and older, of prescription drugs than there are of marijuana.<sup>i</sup> Between 1995 and 2005, the number of substance abuse treatment admissions for prescription pain relievers increased by more than 300%.<sup>ii</sup> Washington State is now one of 16 states in the country where overdoses have now surpassed automobile accidents as the leading cause of death in the [state](#).<sup>iii</sup> Locally, 11% of Thurston County 12<sup>th</sup> graders admitted to using prescription drugs, well above the national average of 4.7% for 16-17 year olds.<sup>iv</sup> The bottom line is clear: Abusing prescription drugs can have serious consequences and ruin promising lives.

There is a growing trend of teens using and sharing these drugs to get high, often in combination with other drugs or alcohol. An astonishing 70% of teens 12 and older who abuse pain relievers say they get them from a friend or relative.<sup>v</sup> Access to these drugs is as easy as opening the family medicine cabinet, a family member's purse or a friend's locker. And since there is no smoke or smell, prescription drug abuse can be hard to detect.



As a parent, you play an important role in preventing this problem. Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of prescription drug abuse that could include constricted pupils, respiratory depression, flushed skin, slurred speech, and/or chest pain with heart palpitations. Talk to your teen about the dangers of prescription drugs and take responsibility for the prescriptions in your home in three steps:

### **Step 1: Monitor**

Parents are in an influential position to immediately help reduce teen access to prescription drugs because these drugs are found in the home. Start by taking note of how many pills are in each of your prescription bottles or pill packets. If your teen has been prescribed a drug, be sure you control the medication, and monitor dosages and refills. Make sure your friends and relatives, especially grandparents, are also aware of the risks. Encourage them to regularly monitor their own medicine cabinets.

### ***Step 2: Secure***

Teens abuse prescription drugs because they are easily accessible and either free or inexpensive. Approach securing your prescriptions the same way you would other valuables in your home, like jewelry or cash. There's no shame in helping protect those items. The same holds true for your medications. Safely if possible, keep all medicines, both prescription and over-the-counter, in a safe place, such as a locked cabinet your teen cannot access.

### ***Step 3: Dispose***

Safely disposing of expired or unused prescription medications is a critical step in helping protect your teens. Take an inventory of all of the prescription drugs in your home. Start by discarding expired or unused prescription drugs, when your teens are not home. Unbelievable though it may seem teenagers will retrieve discarded prescription drugs from the trash. To help prevent this from happening, mix the medication with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter. Put the mixture into an empty can or bag and discard. Another option is to take them to Group Health in Olympia where there is a disposal bin out front of the pharmacy. For more information on medicine return and the effects prescriptions have on our environment please visit [www.medicinereturn.com](http://www.medicinereturn.com).

For more information on prescription drug abuse please visit our [Prescription Drug Fact Page](#) or contact Tamara Clark at TOGETHER! (360) 493-2230 ext. 10.

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<sup>i</sup> SAMHSA 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (September 2007).

<sup>ii</sup> Treatment Episode Data Set, SAMHSA, 1995-2005.

<sup>iii</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report, September 2009.

<sup>iv</sup> Washington State Healthy Youth Survey 2008, Monitoring the Future 2006.

<sup>v</sup> SAMHSA, 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (September 2007).