

# 8 Questions About Medications and Teens



## 1 WHAT ARE MEDICATIONS?

Medications are made by pharmaceutical companies according to strict standards. They are sold as prescription or over-the-counter products. Medication can include pills, tablets, capsules, lozenges, gummies, suppositories, liquids, topical creams and injections or infusions.



## 2 HOW ARE PHARMACEUTICAL & OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS DIFFERENT?

Pharmaceutical medications are prescribed by a doctor, then prepared & issued by a pharmacist. Over-the-counter medications do not require a prescription & are available on store shelves. Both come with very specific instructions for use.

## 3 WHAT IS MEDICATION MISUSE?

There are lots of ways to misuse/abuse medication, including:

- using medicine prescribed for someone else
- taking more than recommended
- changing its form (eg. breaking or crushing pills)
- taking it by other methods (eg. snorting instead of swallowing)
- taking medicine just to feel the mood altering side effects (to get 'high')

## 4 WHY DO TEENS MISUSE MEDICATION?

Teens may be curious and choose to misuse/abuse medications for a variety of reasons, including to:

- relax & have fun
- relieve pain
- numb or avoid difficult thoughts or feelings
- try something new
- fit in / make friends
- celebrate

Misusing medications to cope is not a healthy strategy. Try music, reading, physical activity, hobbies, volunteering, hanging out with friends or talking with others about how you feel.



## 5 HOW CAN MISUSING MEDICATION AFFECT MY BRAIN & BODY?

Effects vary depending on the type of medication and the amount taken. Stimulant drugs will speed up the brain, while depressant drugs will slow it down. Taking medicine you do not need, medicine prescribed for someone else, mixing different types of medicines together, or mixing medication with alcohol or cannabis, can have unpredictable side effects, including overdose and death.

## 6 WHEN DOES MEDICATION MISUSE BECOME A PROBLEM?

When it causes negative consequences, including physical problems (eg. dizziness, headaches, upset stomach) and/or psychological, social and academic problems (eg. worsening mental health, arguing with friends or family, falling grades).

Teens who keep using medication even when they experience negative consequences likely have a problem.

## 7 WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT MEDICATION MISUSE?

Some teens think medicines are safer than street drugs because they are made by a pharmaceutical company. But, just like street drugs, misusing or abusing medicine increases the risk of harm, overdose and death.



## 8

## HOW DO I LEARN MORE?

There is much more to learn about medications so you can be informed and TALK SMART.

Visit [mentalhealthliteracy.org](http://mentalhealthliteracy.org) to get the info you need.