

# WHAT CAN WE DO TO PREVENT Rx DRUG ABUSE?

There are specific strategies to decrease the likelihood of Rx drug abuse:



**Talk, Talk, Talk!** Children & teens whose parents/caregivers talk with them early and often about the dangers of drugs and alcohol use are less likely to use them—by as much as 50%! **Keep talking — they ARE listening!**



**Set clear rules.** Make sure your teen knows that s/he should always take medications as prescribed and NEVER share with others. It's unsafe AND illegal!



**Monitor and secure.** Take charge of your own prescriptions and ask family members/friends to do the same.



**Understand.** If you/a loved one is prescribed an Rx opioid, talk with the doctor to understand: what the Rx is for; when, how, and for how long it should be taken; risks/side effects; and monitor the dispensing. Rx drug abuse can start with the use of legitimately prescribed drugs.



**Safe Disposal.** Dispose of unused/unwanted drugs & over the counter (OTC) medications in drug disposal boxes at the tri-town police stations.



Learn more, find support. Contact TTC at (978) 887-6512 or [tritowncouncil.org](http://tritowncouncil.org). Click on the **COALITION TAB** to access opiate information.

  @tritowncouncil



In collaboration with the Topsfield Board of Health and The Coalition—a program of Tri-Town Council  
[tritowncouncil.org](http://tritowncouncil.org)

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## Rx DRUG ABUSE: GET THE FACTS

*Drug dependency and overdose death rates reaching epidemic proportions in Essex County and thousands more at risk*



Sources: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA); National Institutes of Health (NIH); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Centers for Disease Control (CDC); Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM); Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA); Masco YRBS, 2014.

## PRESCRIPTION (Rx) DRUGS:

### What are the risks?

Some Rx drugs such as opioids/opiates, depressants and stimulants may lead to adverse health effects including addiction. These drugs, when prescribed and monitored by a medical professional and used responsibly, are relatively safe and effective. But risk of dependence and addiction exists; the US is in the midst of a prescription opioid overdose epidemic.

The risks increase significantly if medications are abused—meaning they are taken for reasons and in doses not approved by a doctor, or taken by persons other than the prescribed. Rx drug abuse can lead to other illicit drug use. **4 out of 5 heroin users started out by abusing opioids.**

## IS THERE AN Rx DRUG ABUSE PROBLEM?

Yes. Here's why.

- Essex County had **2<sup>nd</sup> highest number** of heroin and opioid overdose deaths in Massachusetts in 2014 (MA DPH) - almost quadrupling since 2010.
- Nationally, Rx overdose death rates have **climbed 303%** since 2001. (MMA)
- **Drug overdoses were leading cause** of accidental death in US in 2014, surpassing motor vehicle accidents. (ASAM; MMA)
- Fatal heroin overdoses have **increased 321%** since 2001. (MMA)
- With exception of youth ages 12—17, **heroin use increased** across all demographic groups since 2002. (CDC, 2015)
- **Opioid prescriptions have nearly tripled from 1991-2013.** 259 million prescriptions were written for opioids in 2012 —*enough for every American to have his/her own bottle of pills.* (NIDA, 2014; ASAM)

## OPIATES & OPIOIDS

*Opioids and opiates are often used interchangeably.*

OPIATES: Drugs derived from opium poppy plants.

OPIOIDS: Synthetic drugs created to simulate effects of opium but chemically different.

Purpose: To relieve pain.

### Common Opioids/Opiates

Vicodin	Percocet	Fentanyl
Oxycontin	Morphine	Demerol
Codeine		

*The illegal drug Heroin is in the opioid drug class.*

## DEPRESSANTS

Definition: Drugs that slow down activity in brain and spinal cord.

Purpose: To relieve stress, anxiety and treat sleep disorders.

### Common Depressants

Valium	Xanax	Nembutal
Ambien	Klonopin	

## STIMULANTS (AMPHETAMINES)

Definition: Drugs that increase activity in the brain/body boosting energy, alertness and attention; raise heart and breathing rate and blood pressure.

Purpose: To treat ADHD, narcolepsy, and some forms of depression.

### Common Stimulants

Ritalin	Adderall	Concerta
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## WHO IS AT RISK?:

Rx drug misuse/abuse affects people from various backgrounds, but some population groups are more vulnerable than others:

- **Young adults** (age 18-25): Have highest rates of Rx drug abuse. (NIDA)
- **Adolescents** (age 12-17): Are more likely to misuse Rx drugs than adults (age 26 and older). Young women in this age group misuse Rx drugs at higher rates than young men. (NIDA; SAMSHA)
- **Older adults** (age 50+): Rx drug misuse and abuse is increasing in older adults as of 2014. (NIDA)

A new report released by the CDC and FDA finds **heroin use is on the rise** among both men and women across all age groups and income levels. Most striking was the **increase of use** among populations who previously had low use rates—*women, the privately insured, and people with higher incomes.*

## WHAT ABOUT OUR YOUTH?

- **MOST** Masco youth (over 95%) are **NOT** abusing Rx drugs or illicit drugs (including heroin, meth, cocaine). (Masco YRBS 2014)

## BUT

- 2013 survey by Partnership for Drug Free Kids finds that **1 in 4 teens has misused Rx drugs in their lifetime—a 33% increase over 2008.**
- Recent NYU study found that of high school seniors using heroin, 75% started out misusing Rx opioids.
- After alcohol and marijuana, Rx and over-the-counter drugs are most commonly abused substances among youth 14 and older. (NIDA)