

Adolescent Prescription Drug Misuse in Arkansas

Misuse of prescription drugs by Arkansas youth is a serious health and safety problem...

Of over 85,000 Arkansas students (grades 6, 8, 10, and 12) who participated in the 2008 Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment (APNA) survey¹:

- 1 in 10 have taken a sedative (such as Valium, Xanax, or sleeping pills) without a doctor telling them to – 5.6% have done so in the past 30 days
- About 3% have taken stimulants (such as Ritalin) without a doctor's order

Other facts about AR adolescent prescription drug use:

- Females are more likely to have misused sedatives than males
- The National Survey on Drug Use and Health shows that past-year non-medical use of prescription painkillers among Arkansas youth has been on the rise since 2002²

The rate of past 30-day sedative use among Arkansas youth is roughly three times that of the national rate

Consequences of prescription drug misuse are serious:

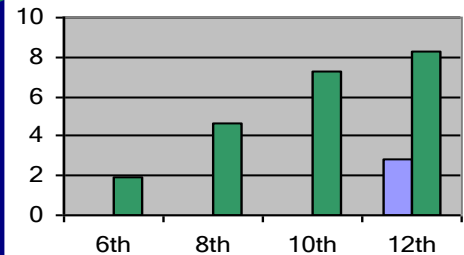
- Serious injuries, illness, and even death can occur
- There is no way to predict how you will react to a medication not prescribed to you
- Mixing prescription drugs with alcohol and street drugs is particularly risky

Teens say they get prescription drugs from home, people they know, and the internet⁵

Commonly Misused Prescription Drugs

Type of Drug	Examples
Narcotics (painkillers)	OxyContin, Vicodin, codeine, Percocet
Sedatives/Tranquilizers	Valium, Xanax
Stimulants	Ritalin, Adderall

Past 30 Day Sedative Use^{1,3}



Note: National data for this item is only available for 12th graders

Legend: United States (light blue), Arkansas (green)

Follow these steps to reduce the risk of prescription drug misuse among teens:

- Talk to youth about following instructions when taking medicine, and remind them that it's never okay to share medication with someone or to take someone else's medication.
- Tell youth that prescription drugs can be just as dangerous as street drugs when used inappropriately.
- Teens often cite stress as a reason for using drugs. Talk with them about safe ways to reduce stress.
- Keep medications locked up where children and youth can't access them.
- Mix expired or unused prescriptions with a material like coffee grounds or kitty litter before throwing them away, to deter youth from taking them from the trash (never flush them down the toilet—this pollutes the drinking water supply).
- Monitor adolescents' online activities—many web sites don't even require a prescription.

¹ Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment, 2008 (the APNA student survey is conducted annually by the AR Department of Human Services)

² Arkansas Epi-Gram, July 2008 (Epi-Grams are a project of the AR Department of Human Services and the University of AR for Medical Sciences)

³ Monitoring the Future, 2008 (The Monitoring the Future Survey is a project of the National Institute on Drug Abuse - NIDA)

⁴ White House Office of National Drug Control Policy