





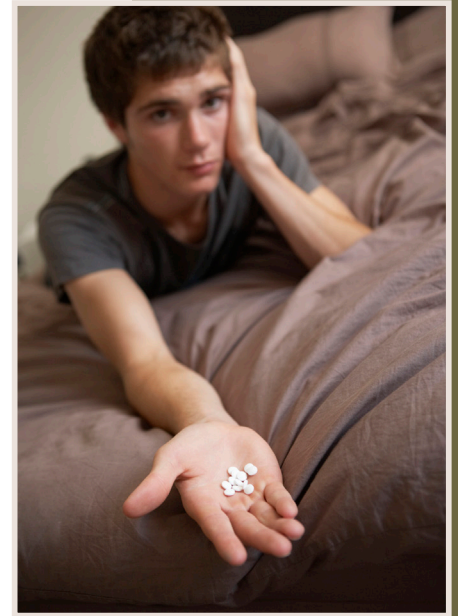


## Prescription Drug Abuse and Poisonings: The Facts

Each year about 33 million containers of prescription and over-the-counter drugs are left unused in Washington. These unused drugs are like a loaded gun in the wrong hands. **Drug overdoses have surpassed car crashes as the leading cause of accidental deaths in Washington.** With the medicine cabinet serving as the new “drug dealer,” the importance of properly disposing of leftover medications cannot be stressed enough.

### Prescription drug abuse by Washington teens is on the rise:

-  Washington State has one of the highest teen prescription drug abuse rates in the nation – 12% of high school seniors used prescription pain medicines to get high in the last 30 days. *(WA DOH)*
-  Many teens mistakenly think medicines are safer to abuse than illegal drugs.
-  Three fifths (57%) of all new prescription drug abusers were younger than age 18 in 2009. Over 20% of high school students have taken medicine for a nonmedical reason. *(National Survey on Drug Use and Health)*
-  More than three out of five teens say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from parents’ and grandparents’ medicine cabinets. Over half of teens abusing medicines get them from a family member or friend, often without their knowledge. *(WA DOH)*
-  Youth admissions to state-funded treatment for prescription opiate abuse are now 18 times higher than in 2001. *(WA Division Alcohol and Substance Abuse)*
-  Abuse of prescription opiates, like OxyContin and Vicodin, can lead to heroin use. 39% of heroin users said they got addicted to prescription painkillers before starting to use heroin, in a recent study in King County. *(UW Alcohol & Drug Abuse Institute)*



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Today, prescription drug abuse is considered the fastest-growing drug problem in the country...Without question, getting old, unused, or expired drugs out of medicine cabinets is critical.

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- U.S. Attorney  
General Eric Holder,  
September, 2010

continues 

## Accidental overdoses and Poisonings:

-  Fatal poisonings increased 395% from 1990 to 2006 in Washington State; 85% of these deaths involved medicines. (WA DOH)
-  In 2007, 18,000 people went to Washington State emergency rooms because of nonmedical use of medicines. (Drug Abuse Warning Network)
-  Children are at high risk for accidental overdose or poisoning when prescription drugs are stored in the house and not properly disposed of:
  - *Over 17,000 calls to the Washington Poison Center in 2009 involved children under the age of six who had been poisoned by medicines left in the home.*
  - *Children are the most common victims of nonfatal poisonings involving the accidental ingestion of prescription or over-the-counter drugs.*
  - *32% of child poisoning deaths in Washington were caused by someone else's prescription medication and 26% were caused by over-the-counter medications. (WA DOH)*
-  The elderly are also at risk – over 2,800 calls to the Washington Poison Center in 2009 were from seniors calling about medications.



Find out about efforts to create a statewide program for the safe return and disposal of leftover medicines.

## Find out more and get involved.



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