



Upcoming Events:

- Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month
- Gay Pride Month
- National Adopt a Cat Month
- DD, WWII—June 6
- National Cancer Survivors Day—June 7
- National Chocolate Ice Cream Day—June 7
- Best Friends Day—June 8
- Monkey Around Day—June 14
- Forgiveness Day—June 26
- National PTSD Awareness Day—June 27

"If you have to put someone on a pedestal, put teachers. They are society's heroes."

- Guy Kawasaki

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Should Your Teen Take that Opioid Prescription?

Whether due to a sport injury, getting wisdom teeth pulled, or just a freak accident, there are many reasons why doctors may prescribe opioid painkillers to teens.

But with the nationwide opioid addiction epidemic constantly in the news, you probably have some hesitation about letting your teen take the prescription.

On one hand, you don't want your child to suffer intense pain; but then again you also don't want that one prescription to lead to addiction or act as a gateway to other drugs.

And that fear isn't completely unwarranted. According to the latest National Survey on Drug Use and Health, almost 900,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 17 misused pain relievers within the past year.

Here's another scary fact: many heroin users start off by abusing prescription medication. So what should you do?

Obviously you know your teen best, below are some things to consider if you're thinking about letting them use prescription pain medication.

Keep in mind: there is a responsible way to use opioid prescriptions.

Doctors prescribe pain medication for severe or moderately severe pain.

Keep in mind that many pain meds are very addictive.

Because we hear so much about the misuse of painkillers, we can sometimes forget that the *majority* of teens use them with no issue.

Follow these steps to make sure your teen is using prescription pain medication responsibly:

- Do not share your medication! It's specifically prescribed for you, and you should be the only one taking it. A normal dose for you, could be fatal for someone else.
- Mixing prescription painkillers with alcohol is deadly (even though it's illegal for them to drink anyway).
- You can also take over-the-counter pain meds or try other more natural ways to lessen your pain.

Also have a chat with the doctor. Internet research alone might not cut it. So you may also want to have a discussion with the doctor about the different prescription options, any concerns you have about addiction, different painkiller options, what to expect after the procedure, how long the teen should be on the medication, dosage, etc. After your teen gets the prescription ...

Monitor usage closely. Before leaving office, have the doctor clearly explain to the both of you the medicine he or she is prescribing, side effects, overdose risk, the proper dosage, and the duration. Since the painkillers are so powerful, many prescriptions will call for them to be taken at least six to eight hours apart (some as much as 10 hours apart). But when the pain hits, your teen (just like many adults) could be tempted to take them before they are supposed to.

Keep the meds with you. Yes, you (and probably the doctor) have had the conversation with your teen about painkiller misuse. And, yes, you respect and trust your teenager. But is there really any good reason to allow him or her to keep an entire bottle of powerful painkillers? If you really can't think of any, you might just want to keep the prescription with you. For your teen, it removes the temptation to overuse or share with friends. Each day, you can give your teen the appropriate amount of pills they will need.

Get rid of extra pills. When the prescription days are over, make sure you get any leftover pills out of your house. You can drop it off at an official prescription drop off location or properly dispose of the medication at home.





Stress and Anxiety in Kids

School closures, and days spent cooped up at home can make children feel unsettled. They may not be able to express how they are feeling about what's happened.

Young children thrive on routine, consistency and regularity. They like to know what's next.

Signs they may be feeling anxious might include:

1. Hypervigilance about your health or others: Fears that coronavirus will harm them or someone they love.
2. Separation anxiety: If your child suddenly needs to know where you are at all times or won't play alone, he or she may be feeling unsafe.
3. Moodiness and tantrums: Meltdowns oversensitivity and talking back can be a child's way of venting anxiety.
4. Difficulty sleeping is a strong indicator that a child feels troubled, and as we all know, an overtired child will have trouble coping with even the smallest setback.

If you notice any of these signs, making time for a chat with your child is an essential first step. Check in with yourself first to make sure you feel centered and calm, then begin by finding out what they already know. Resist the urge to tell half-truths or offer blanket reassurances. For children, the fear of what they don't know is far worse than reckoning with something.

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How to Steer Your Teen Without Hovering or Nagging

Brain chemistry changes dramatically during adolescence and puberty. Your strategies must take into consideration the realities of teen brain development.

Executive function skills are brain-based functions that help teens regulate behavior, set and achieve goals, balance desires with responsibilities, and learn to function independently while also recognizing the need for guidance. There are 11 key skills critical to school and life success: response inhibition, working memory, flexibility, organization, emotional control, sustained attention, task initiation, planning and prioritizing, time management, goal-directed persistence, and metacognition.

Executive skills take 25 years to fully develop. For adolescents with ADHD, it may take until age 30. When those skills lag behind, we too often label teens as lazy or oppositional when really the problems are neurological ones.

#1 Pick Your Battles You don't have to fight about everything. There are times when you can (and should) walk away.

#2 Use Natural Consequences In some scenarios, a tween's actions are punishment enough. For example, a child exceeding her monthly texting allowance either has to pay the extra charges or she loses the privilege of using her phone when the texts run out. Those are natural consequences to actions. Let them understand the connection between cause and effect. Or, remind your teen that her behavior is the trigger for consequences. Say, "When I hear that tone, it means you're taking a time out. When you apologize for the mean things you said, you can come out." This gives your child an active role in avoiding punishment.

#3 Privileges Contingent on Performance Meaning: if you do this, you get that. If you complete your homework, you get your phone back. Limit privilege freebies so that kids have a real incentive for finishing the work that unlocks the things they enjoy. Also, be certain to reward kids for behaving well.

#4 Be Willing to Negotiate and Make Deals In adolescence, kids should take on more responsibility and parents should relinquish some (not all) authority. To make this work, parents must try to respectfully understand where kids are coming from – why they want what they

want – and be willing to negotiate a solution that leaves everyone happy. Ask your child how he would solve the problem. Teens are more likely to participate in a plan if they feel like an equal partner contributing meaningful input on the rules.

#5 Build in Verification When you strike a behavior contract, or a deal, you can't just take your teen's word that she is following through. You need to create a reliable, fair way to check in. For example, if you created a plan contingent upon turning in homework, email the teacher to ask, "Can you let me know whether she did her homework this week?" This weekly report can be written into your child's IEP or 504 Plan, and it can help you determine whether your child is holding up her end of the bargain.

#6 Involve Others You don't need to do it all yourself. Sometimes adolescents respond better to perspectives that aren't their parents'.

#7 Ask Questions Try asking questions to draw out information. "When are you planning to start that science project?" "Do you think you have enough time to finish it?" This helps to walk kids through the process in a way they may not have considered. "What's your plan?" uses language that supports executive-skill development.

#8 Use Positive Communication Tricks If your family does this...try these alternative strategies:

- Call each other names. > Express anger without hurt.
- Put each other down. > Say, "I am angry that you did..."
- Interrupt each other. > Take turns; keep it short.
- Criticize too much. > Point out the good and bad.
- Get defensive. > Listen, then calmly disagree.
- Lecture. > Tell it straight and short.
- Talk in sarcastic tone. > Talk in normal tone.
- Dredge up the past. > Stick to the present.
- Read others' minds. > Ask others' opinions.
- Command, order. > Request nicely.
- Give the silent treatment. > Say what's bothering you.
- Make light of something. > Take it seriously.



TOM WOLF, GOVERNOR
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