

## PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

*Prescription Drug Use is at an all time high among teenagers. Findings from the Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, show that one in four teens has misused or abused a prescription drug at least once in their lifetime. That is a 33% increase since 2008. It's important that parents talk to their children about the proper way to handle prescription medication, long before they are teenagers.*

Parents, if your child is prescribed medicine for a legitimate reason, it's important you monitor its use. Kids who abuse medicine are starting early. One in five kids has done so before the age of 14. Parents are the first line of defense in protecting teens from this dangerous behavior.

Local data from various agencies indicates amphetamine is one of the most abused substances of arrested youth in Lafayette Parish. Amphetamines are often prescribed to manage symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and other behavioral disorders.

One of the greatest dangers posed by prescription medication is combining use with alcohol or other illicit drugs, also known as Poly Drug Use. This can damage your heart and cause other severe bodily injury. The Coroner's Office reports Poly Drug Overdose as the leading cause of drug-related deaths in Lafayette. Benzodiazepine (a.k.a. Valium, Xanax, etc.), alcohol and marijuana were commonly found among poly drug overdose deaths.

## INFANCY SHOULDN'T START WITH DETOX.

Prescription Drug use doesn't just impact the abuser. If a person is pregnant or becomes pregnant, their baby could suffer. Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) happens when a baby is exposed to drugs before birth. NAS most often is caused when a woman takes opioids during pregnancy, the child can be born addicted and go through withdrawals. But other drugs can also cause NAS:

**Antidepressants** (prescription drugs used to treat depression)

**Benzodiazepines** (sleeping pills)

Babies with NAS are more likely to suffer from low birthweight, have breathing and feeding problems and suffer seizures. Birth defects are also a symptom of NAS. If you are addicted to prescription drugs, or drugs of any kind and do become pregnant, tell your Doctor right away. There are ways to lower the risk to your child. Getting treatment can help you stop using drugs and is safer for your baby than getting no treatment at all. If you're not pregnant, quit using street drugs or abusing prescription drugs before you get pregnant. This is the best way to prevent NAS.

**Symptoms can be different for every baby with NAS**; they can last from 1 week to 6 months, and increase hospital stays. Signs of NAS withdrawal could include:

- Body shakes (tremors), seizures (convulsions), overactive reflexes (twitching) and tight muscle tone**
- Fussiness, excessive crying or having a high-pitched cry**
- Poor feeding, poor sucking or slow weight gain**
- Breathing really fast**
- Fever, sweating or blotchy skin**
- Trouble sleeping and lots of yawning**
- Diarrhea or throwing up**
- Stuffy nose or sneezing**

**The risks to your baby are great. If you are taking prescription medication it is important to seek prenatal care and inform your doctor what has been prescribed. Telling your doctor about your prescription use will ensure that you and your baby receive appropriate care.**

## **WHAT WE ARE DOING ABOUT IT**

At **THE KNOWLEDGE EFFECT** we strive to assess the risks factors posed by prescription drug abuse within Lafayette Parish and address those factors by implementing strategies for change. Our aim is to curb prescription drug abuse. Specific action steps taken by our coalition and our partners include:

1. Educating school system employees on recognizing the early signs of abuse
2. Coordinating educational forums for professionals and community members
3. Educating the general public about prescription drug use and its side-effects
4. Assist in coordinating the NAS Project of Acadiana