

GUIDE 01

Talking to Your Child About Prescription Opioids: Preventive Discussions

Parents and guardians may not believe their child is at risk for misusing opioids, but even young teenagers will likely have heard about opioids and overdose at some point. It can be hard to start a conversation, but a calm, non-judgmental discussion with you can benefit your child.

Conversation Guide	Suggested Phrases
<p>Choose the right setting. Keep an eye out for a time when the topic comes up naturally so that the conversation can form naturally, too. For example, if there's a recent news story about a celebrity's opioid use, or if the problem comes up in the child's school or neighborhood, this could provide the opening for a discussion. Informal times to have conversations, such as in the car or while folding laundry, can help to create a less intimidating environment, too.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I saw that [name] did an interview about going through treatment. I know how much you love their [music, movies, sports]! I didn't know they had been struggling with prescription drugs. Have you watched it yet?"
<p>Make it interactive. Asking your child if they have heard about opioids or what they already know can be a good starting point and gives you an opportunity to do some research together.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Have you heard that word before, opioids? Maybe you've heard of the brands of opioids like Vicodin, Ultram, OxyContin, Percocet or Codeine. These prescription pain medications are really addictive. If someone takes them without a prescription – for example, they got pills from a friend or family member – or takes more than their doctor told them to, that person can overdose really easily."
<p>Help your child think through what they would do. Talk to your child about having an "exit plan" if they are offered prescription drugs that are not theirs. Peer pressure can be hard to resist and having a plan to avoid misuse can help them make smart choices on their own. Be sure to practice the exit plan in a comfortable environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What if someone you were friends with told you that you'd feel better if you tried their mom's medication? That they've tried it and it helps them feel less stressed? It could be helpful to have an idea of some things you could say so that making the smart choice in the moment is also the easy choice."
<p>Talk often. These conversations are not a one-time thing, so plan to have many short talks, even as your child gets older. Talking often sets a tone that this will be an ongoing dialogue, and it can make it easier to get over the awkwardness or recover from a weird conversation. Add new information when it's relevant, revisit your expectations often, and let them know you are always there for them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Remember when we were talking about opioids a while ago? I learned something new about them that I want to share with you."

CITATIONS:

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/column-talk-kids-opioids>

https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/opioid-brochure_military-r14f_508c.pdf