

Drug Overdoses  
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Drug overdoses involving prescription drugs cause over 5,000 hospitalizations and 600 deaths each year in Orange County. According to the Orange County Comprehensive Report, “in 2008, 4.7 million teens in Orange County (about 19 percent) reported that they had abused prescription drugs at some point in their lives.” Teenagers often abuse drugs to fit in, and they use over the counter drugs because they are the easiest to access. According to the *Partnership for Drug Free Kids*, teens use drugs because they lack confidence and want a short term happiness.

The Orange County Comprehensive Report also presented, “forty one percent of teenagers indicated that they believe prescription drugs are much “safer” than to use illegal drugs”, but this is not true. Thirty one percent of teenagers think that there is nothing wrong with abusing over the counter drugs and thirty two percent believe that prescription painkillers have fewer side effects than any other drug. This lack of knowledge is why, according to the Orange County Health Care Agency, most drug overdoses were caused unintentionally.

Over the counter drug abuse by teens needs to stop. Although teenagers decide to do drugs on their own, there has been research that demonstrated that parents play an important role in preventing their kids from using drugs. A study by SAMHSA showed that “youth ages 12-17 whose parents express strong disapproval of drug use are far less likely to engage in substance abuse.” The National Crime Prevention council states that the more involved parents are with their children acting as good role models, the less likely they are to abuse drugs.

Overall, most teenagers abuse drugs because they want confidence, a temporary happiness, or even just to fit in and be like other teenagers. Teenagers admit that they abuse over the counter drugs because they are easiest to access. Forty one percent of teens believe that prescription drugs are safer because they have been prescribed by a doctor. Unfortunately, most drug overdoses were caused unintentionally. One solution to this problem can be parent involvement. Parents should talk to their kids at a young age about the dangers of drugs and they should stay involved in their lives as much as possible to let their kids to have a drug free life.