

2014 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey Facts about Teens, Prescription Drugs, and Opiates

Background: In the fall of 2014, 223,000 students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 participated in the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS). About 1,000 schools enrolled in the survey, representing all 39 Washington counties and 215 school districts. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is one four state agencies supporting the HYS to provide data for state and local prevention planning.

What did students report about prescription painkillers (opiates) in the past month?

Most students do not abuse prescription painkillers.

- In 2014, five percent of students in grade 10 reported using pain killers in the past 30 days.
- This was a significant decrease compared to 2012 (six percent) and 2008 (10 percent)

How many students reported ever having used heroin (another type of opiate)?

- Three percent of students in grade 10 reported ever using heroin.
- Since 2010, there is no significant change in lifetime heroin use by students in grade 10.

How many students misused any type of prescription drug?

- 8th grade: four percent
- 10th grade: eight percent
- 12th grade: nine percent

What are the risks when teens misuse prescription drugs/opiates?

Because the teen brain is still developing, teens are at increased risk from any misuse of alcohol or other drugs, compared to those age 21 and older. Risks from prescription drugs and opiates include:

- Poor school performance
- Addiction
- Depressed breathing
- Death due to overdose

What increases the risk that teens will misuse prescription drugs/opiates?

- A low perception of harm.
- Friends who use.
- The belief that it is readily available and easy to get.
- Parents who have favorable attitudes toward drug use.
- Community laws and attitudes favorable toward drug use.

What can parents and other adults do to help teens avoid drug use and its negative consequences?

- Talk with children early and often about the risks of misusing prescription drugs.
- Parents are the number one influence on their children's decisions about alcohol and other drugs – get tips for talking with teens at www.StartTalkingNow.org.
- Lock up prescription and over the counter medications you have at home, and monitor your supply. Be sure friends and relatives do the same.
- Monitor them. Know where your teens are and who they are with.

- Bond with them: love them unconditionally, let them know you value them, and stay involved in their lives.
- Help teens to act independently and resist peer pressure.
- Set boundaries: have clear rules against using drugs, and enforce logical consequences.
- Get help if you see warning signs. Call the Washington State Recovery Help Line for free emotional support and referrals to treatment: 1-866-789-1511 or Teenline: 1-866-833-6546.

What DSHS is doing to promote healthier youth and communities

DSHS is nationally recognized as a leader in supporting evidence-based prevention practices and collaborating with community-based prevention organizations. DSHS provides funding, training and oversight to communities to prevent, reduce and treat substance use disorders, promote mental health, and increase healthy community norms. DSHS also supports statewide initiatives to increase public knowledge about drug prevention and mental health.

For other Healthy Youth Survey fact sheets, visit www.AskHYS.net. For more information about DSHS-funded prevention services, email Sarah.Mariani@dshs.wa.gov.