



# WELLNESS Newsletter

This publication is brought to you by the District Wellness Council, which is dedicated to educating Rush-Henrietta families about important topics to keep your children healthy.

ISSUE  
08  
Winter  
2015

## Prescription Drug Abuse and Opiate Addiction

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has officially declared that prescription drug abuse in the United States is an epidemic.

In 2012, an estimated 493,000 persons 12 and older used a prescription pain reliever non-medically for the first time within the past year. This averages to about 1,350 initiates per day.

Medical emergencies resulting from prescription drug abuse increased 132 percent during the past seven years, with opioid involvement rising 183 percent.

Experts say the increase in heroin use is linked to prescription opioid abuse. Young people often become addicted to pain pills and progress to heroin — which provides the same euphoric high — when pills are hard to come by or become too expensive.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), heroin use rose by 75 percent between 2007 and 2011, with an 80 percent increase in first-time use among 12-to-17-year-olds since 2002.

## Heroin use is a problem in our community.

Locally, the percentage of high school students who reported using heroin more than doubled between 2005 and 2011.

The Monroe County Crime lab reports that seizures of heroin are increased by 700 percent in the past few years.

The Monroe County Medical Examiner's Office reported that heroin killed 65 people in 2013. This is compared to 29 deaths in 2012 and only 11 in 2011.



## Resources and Important Links

### **New York State Department of Health**

[www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)

**For help 24 hours a day,**

**7 days a week call**

**1-877-8-HOPENY**

[www.combatheroin.ny.gov](http://www.combatheroin.ny.gov)

### **New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services**

[www.oasas.ny.gov/accesshelp](http://www.oasas.ny.gov/accesshelp)

# **Heroin and Prescription Drug Abuse Is Addictive and Can Be Deadly**

## **Loss of tolerance**

Regular use of opioids leads to greater tolerance. For example, more is needed to achieve the same effect (high). Overdoses occur when people begin to use again. This is usually following a period of not using (abstinence) such as after coming out of treatment.

## **Mixing drugs**

Mixing heroin or prescription opioids with other drugs, especially depressants such as benzodiazepines (Xanax, Klonopin, etc.) or alcohol, can lead to an accidental overdose, respiratory problems, and death. The effect of mixing drugs is greater than the effect one would expect if taking the drugs separately.

## **Variation in strength of heroin**

Heroin may vary in strength and effect based on the purity.

## **Serious illness**

Users with serious illness such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C, heart disease, and endocarditis are at greater risk for overdose.

## **Prevent Prescription Drug Misuse**

- Despite what some people may assume, abusing prescription drugs is not safe.
- Safeguard your meds by placing your prescribed medication in a secure location and tracking the number of pills at all times
- Never share medication that is prescribed for you
- Never take medication that was prescribed for someone else.

## **Signs and Symptoms**

Change in behavior is key when one suspects there is substance abuse. The key is to get the person assistance as soon as possible.

### **Physical Signs**

Loss or increase in appetite;  
Unexplained weight loss or gain  
Small pupils, decreased respiratory rate  
Nausea, vomiting, shaky hands,  
feet, and large pupils signs of  
opioid withdrawal

### **Behavioral Signs**

Change in attitude/personality  
Change in friends; new hangout  
Avoiding contact with family  
Isolation and secretive behavior  
Wearing long-sleeved shirts  
or out of season clothing

### **Advanced Warning Signs**

Missing medications  
Burnt or missing spoons  
Missing shoelaces/belts  
Small bags with powder residue  
Syringes

**~ For help 24 hours a day ~ 7 days a week call ~ 1-877-8-HOPENY~**