

Prescription Drug Misuse: Trends and Safe Use and Disposal



Introduction

Opioid misuse has become an impactful public health issue in the Greater Cincinnati region. The opioid epidemic sparked reform on opioid prescribing practices, the expansion of treatment and harm reduction programs, and the cohesion of communities and families to raise awareness and break the stigma surrounding opioid use. For many individuals, opioid addiction starts with prescription drug misuse. This can be defined as:

1. Taking more of a prescription drug than you're supposed to.
2. Taking a prescription drug that was not prescribed for you.
3. Taking a prescription drug for a reason other than the reason for the prescription.

Importance of Prevention Education

When 7th-12th graders in the Greater Cincinnati area were asked about substances used in the past 30 days, the use of prescription drugs not prescribed to them was the lowest percentage of any substance for the past 8 years (Student Survey, 2020). Notably, the average age of onset for prescription drug misuse is in an individual's early to mid-twenties (SAMHSA, 2017). This outlines the vital opportunity to begin conversations about safe medication use and disposal education beginning early; therefore equipping young people to make safer and more informed decisions regarding their use of prescription drugs before use becomes misuse.

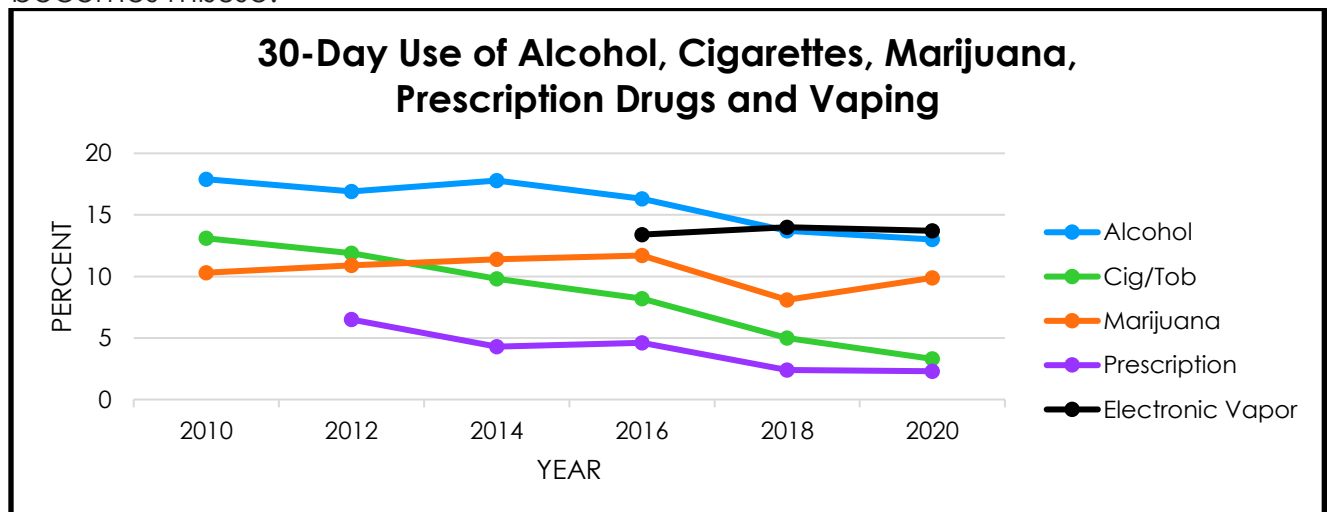


Figure 1. 30-Day Use of Alcohol, Cigarettes, Marijuana, Prescription Drugs and Vaping.

Safe Prescription Medication Use Tips

- *Take your medication.* Take your capsules or tablets whole, unless otherwise instructed and take at the instructed time of the day.
- *Tell your doctor or pharmacist if there are any problems with taking your medication, including cost.* For more information, visit <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resources-you-drugs/stop-learn-go-tips-talking-your-pharmacist-learn-how-use-medicines-safely>
- *Know your medications.* Know the name and dosages of your medications, why the medication is important, and what it treats.
- *Do not take more medication than directed.* Even if you miss a dose, it can be dangerous to take more medication than prescribed.
- *Do not share medications.* Prescriptions are prescribed specifically for you by your physician and sharing medications may result in dangerous effects for others, even if the medication is effective for you.
- *Do not use a medication for a reason other than prescribed.* Using a medication for a reason other than prescribed can be ineffective and potentially dangerous to your health.
- *Read labels.* Most prescription medications may have adverse side effects and can affect each individual differently. Be cautious about operating vehicles before you understand how your medication can affect you. For more information on driving when taking medications, visit <https://www.fda.gov/media/76863/download>.
- *Keep medication in original containers.*
- *Store in a safe place.* Promote the safety of pets, children, or others in the home by keeping prescription medications in a safe, locked place or in a prescription lock box.
- *Dispose of unused, unwanted, or expired medications.*
 - Participate in drug take back days. Drug take back days occur twice a year. For more information, visit <https://takebackday.dea.gov/>
 - Prescription medications can be disposed of in prescription drop boxes, commonly found in pharmacies. To find the nearest disposal near you, visit <https://apps2.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=elst>
 - Utilize drug disposal bags. Ask your pharmacy if drug disposal bags are available for you. For more information, visit deterrasystem.com.

References

Lipari, R. N., Ahrnsbrak, R. D., Pemberton, M. R., & Porter, J. D. (2017, September). Risk and protective factors and estimates of substance use initiation: Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. NSDUH Data Review, pp. 10-11. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>

Student Drug Use Survey [Youth Substance Abuse and Other Behaviors Survey]. (2020). PreventionFIRST!, Cincinnati, OH.