

# Parentally Speaking

A monthly publication for caregivers in Middlesex County  
Providing Substance Abuse Prevention, Education and Advocacy



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## OxyContin Abuse and Addiction: True Facts

According to a recent report by the U.S. Department of Health National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), recreational use of OxyContin has become an increasingly significant problem in recent years, especially among adolescents.

In 2008, NIDA's "Monitoring the Future" study reported annual prevalence rates of OxyContin use as 2.1 percent, 3.6 percent, and 4.7 percent for 8th, 10th, and 12th graders respectively.

OxyContin is classified as an opioid, one of the three classes of prescription drugs that are most commonly abused in the United States today. OxyContin is a powerful and highly addictive painkiller that has serious health side effects if abused.

Opioids can take the form of synthetic chemicals or can be biologically harvested from opium poppies. Opiates, which are part of the opioid family, refer to naturally occurring chemicals that are derived from opium poppy.

Opioids are generally prescribed by physicians as painkillers, however

sometimes they are used to alleviate coughing and diarrhea.

Someone who wishes to abuse these drugs and receives them from a friend or relative or seeks access via the internet may face serious legal consequences.



The abuse of any form of an opioid may result in symptoms including: euphoria, nausea, depressed respiration, sleepiness, and clammy skin. Users may also experience seizures, dizziness, weakness, loss of consciousness, coma, confusion, and cardiac arrest.

High doses can depress respiration to a fatal level, especially when used in combination with

other depressants such as alcohol.

Both physically and psychologically, these substances are powerfully addictive; the withdrawal process is intense.

Symptoms of withdrawal include suicidal thoughts, cold sweats, immobility, insomnia, severe diarrhea, abnormal body temperature and heartbeat, and clinical depression.

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Drugs like Oxycontin, when used for the alleviation of pain, are typically administered in the form of time-release tablets, which diminishes the effect of the drug to a safe level. Recreational users and addicts usually crush the tablets and snort the powder, or mix it with water to inject. This activity counteracts the time-release feature and intensifies the user's high while also increasing the potential health risks.



Over the years, there have been increasing numbers of emergency room visits related to substance abuse.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's (SAMHSA) Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) issued a report in 2006 which found that there were almost 113 million emergency room visits associated with substance use in that year.

Of these visits, nearly 750,000 of them involved non-medical use of pharmaceuticals. In particular, opiate and/or opioid painkillers made up more than 250,000 of these emergency room visits.

Prescription drug abuse is a significant problem in the United States.

The 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) reported that in 2006, 2.5 million people (ages 12 and older) first used prescription medication for non-medical reasons.

Of these, 84 percent used pain relievers like OxyContin. Even more alarming is that from 2002 to 2008 OxyContin use has continued to increase among 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students. No matter which prescription drug someone chooses to abuse the consequences are serious and steps to recovery should be taken.

For more information, pamphlets and videos that discuss Prescription and Over-the-Counter drug abuse, call NCADD at 732-254-3344.

#### References

- "Monitoring the Future, National Results on Adolescent Drug Use: Overview of Key Findings 2008" National Institute on Drug Abuse (2008) 1-79. <http://www.nida.nih.gov/PDF/overview2008.pdf>
- "Drug Abuse Warning Network, 2006: National Estimates of Drug -Related Emergency Visits" U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration and Drug Abuse Warning Network (2006) (1-100), p 9, 10, 33, 35, 45 <http://dawninfo.samhsa.gov/files/ED2006/DAWN2k6ED.pdf>
- <http://drugrehabtreatment.com/oxycontin-abuse.html>

#### **Operation "Medicine Cabinet" Scheduled for November 14<sup>th</sup>**

Operation Medicine Cabinet, a day of amnesty to dispose of unused, unwanted and expired medications in the home, has been scheduled for November 14, 2009, from 10 a.m until 2 p.m.

Operation Medicine Cabinet will give residents the opportunity to rid their homes and medicine cabinets of unused, unwanted and expired medicine.

For more information, call NCADD at 732-254-3344.

## Study Demonstrates Internet Risks for Teen Girls

A recent study demonstrates why parents need to know how their teenage girls present themselves online.

The study, published in the June issue of *Pediatrics*, shows that teen girls who depict themselves online in a provocative way, and teen girls with a history of child abuse, are more likely to receive online sexual advances and then meet those individuals offline.

Moreover, 40 percent of the 173 teen girls in the study reported experiencing online sexual advances, and 26 percent reported meeting someone in person who they first met online.

The report notes that the importance of parental monitoring of adolescent Internet use cannot be understated. This is particularly important given that 55 percent of adolescent Internet users have used or are currently using social networking web sites. This study covered adolescent girls between the ages of 14 and 17.

Each was asked to create an avatar -- an electronic image to represent herself -- and complete a questionnaire regarding her computer and Internet usage, sexual attitudes and activities,

substance use, involvement with peers, and presence of maternal and paternal caregivers.

The avatars they created were evaluated based on previously defined categories spanning a continuum from conservative to provocative, depending on such factors as bust and hip size, upper body clothing, lower body clothing and piercings. Those who had depicted themselves as provocative in terms of body and clothing choices were more likely to have experienced online sexual advances.

In addition to choosing a provocative avatar, other risk factors for online sexual advances included substance abuse and being preoccupied with sex and sexual thoughts. Associating with high-risk peers was an additional risk factor for in-person encounters.

The presentation of oneself in a provocative manner, however, is not necessarily limited to Websites that rely

on avatars as the primary interface.

For female adolescents in particular, self-presentations such as a compilation of photographs and narrative descriptions on networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace might also increase their vulnerability.

Parents can play an important role in preventing exposure to online sexual solicitations. The study found that caregiver presence was associated with significantly fewer reports by adolescents of online solicitations.

Primary care physicians, too, should consider asking teen patients about their Internet use as an aspect of comprehensive care.

The study was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health. More information is available at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center website: [www.cincinnatichildrens.org](http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org)



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## Parents: Factor Smoking, Drinking Into Movie Ratings

Scenes of smoking and drinking should be considered when movies are being rated, but such scenes alone should not automatically earn movies an "R" rating, parents said in a new survey. HealthDay News has reported that researchers surveyed parents of children ages 9 to 15 and found that 66 percent believed that alcohol should be factored into the Motion Picture Association of America's (MPAA) rating system, while about half said that smoking should be a factor in rating movies. However, only 42 percent of parents surveyed said that depictions of alcohol use alone should warrant an "R" rating, and about one in four parents said that smoking scenes should earn films an automatic "R." Public-health advocates have petitioned the MPAA to include smoking in its rating system, and MPAA has said that it would consider smoking scenes -- but not alcohol depictions -- alongside other factors in determining ratings.

*The above report was provided by Join Together a program of the Boston University School of Public Health and is the nation's leading provider of information, strategic planning assistance, and leadership development for community-based efforts to advance effective alcohol and drug policy, prevention, and treatment. To learn more about this organization and to subscribe to their newsletters, please go to [www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org).*

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) of Middlesex County, Inc. is a private, non-profit, community-based health organization providing prevention, education, information and referral services to county residents, businesses, schools, faith-based organizations, municipal alliances, and social service agencies since 1980.

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