

October 2015



coalition news

Prevention news and information from the Tiverton Prevention Coalition

Colds, Flu and Teachable Moments for OTC Medicine Safety

Using over-the-counter medicines, as directed, can do much more than alleviate the symptoms of colds, flu and allergies. For the seven out of 10 parents who are likely to administer OTC meds to their tweens this winter, it's an opportunity to teach OTC safety — something tweens, unfortunately, know all too little about.

Tween OTC literacy not so good. When tweens were asked in recent [national survey](#) how to use OTC medicines responsibly, just 31 percent knew it is not safe to take more medicine than what is directed on the label. Only about half the tweens surveyed believe OTC medicines can be misused. About half knew how to read a Drug Facts label and how to safely store medicine; the other half did not. It's also a bit frightening that 67 percent incorrectly believe they can use someone else's prescription medicines if he or she has the same symptoms! These misperceptions and failing grades in OTC literacy result in over 10,000 ER visits for kids younger than 18 each year. Diagnosis: misuse of OTC medicines.

What to teach. By the time teens reach age 16, about 90 percent say they've taken OTC medicine without adult supervision. Many started taking medicine on their own at 11 or 12 years old. So, the tween years are a great opportunity to teach kids how to self-administer medicine safely. They're ready and able to learn potentially life-saving lessons that will help them keep themselves safe, now and in the future.

Here are some OTC safety instructions that parents should teach their tweens. Let them know that each is a safety precaution they need to learn to become responsible, medicating adults:

- Read and follow label directions on medicine bottles — *each and every time.*
- Follow dosing directions.
- Properly measure medicines with the measuring device that comes with the medicine.
- Safely store medicine away from younger siblings.
- Talk to a parent or trusted adult before taking medicines.

Of course, the best way to teach is by example, not lecture. Follow each of these instructions yourself while administering medicines to your tweens, and explain the why's of each step as you go. It's knowledge they need to protect themselves from misusing OTC medicines.

A great resource for parents and other educators. Scholastic has created The [OTC Medicine Safety](#) program, a free on-line, evidence-based program with proven results to increase children's knowledge about responsible OTC medicine use. It lays out clearly what parents, teachers, nurses and communities can do to prevent the misuse of OTC medicines by tweens. Check it out! We probably can't prevent every case of the cold or flu but, working together to educate our tweens, we can reduce and prevent many of those ER visits that result from misuse of OTC medicines.

OTCRx





REBECCA'S notes

It's hard to believe that we are now entering our fifth and final year of the Drug Free Communities grant, which has funded the town's prevention efforts to the tune of \$125,000 a year. So, while I will apply for a grant renewal next spring, how to sustain the progress we've made so far – with or without future federal funding — will be the Coalition's focus in the new fiscal year, which ends in October 2016.

We have certainly laid the groundwork for sustainability by partnering with the school department, the town's recreation department, TPD and a few local businesses and organizations who do their part to make Tiverton a town where drug-free kids is the norm. And throughout the next year, we'll seek to expand those partnerships — that simply involves a willingness to promote the idea to members and customers that underage drinking and drug use is not inevitable. Communities can create an environment where it is much less likely to happen.

I'll be in touch. I've prepared a 15 to 20 minute Power-Point presentation that explains why and how your group or business can get involved. I hope to be talking to your group very soon!

At it again?

Fool me once; shame on you. Fool me twice; shame on me. This old proverb reminds us if we've been tricked once, we should be wary, so that the person — or in this case, the companies — cannot trick us again.

Tobacco companies, the same ones who for years concealed from consumers the addictive properties of nicotine or other health hazards that go with smoking, are now investing millions of dollars in the electronic cigarette market, according [Tobacco Tactics](#), an industry watchdog.

Big Tobacco's investment also comes at a time when we're seeing a rise in the number of teens who are using e-cigs. [Monitoring the Future](#) reported in 2014 that nine 9 percent of 8th-graders, 16 percent of 10th graders and 17 percent

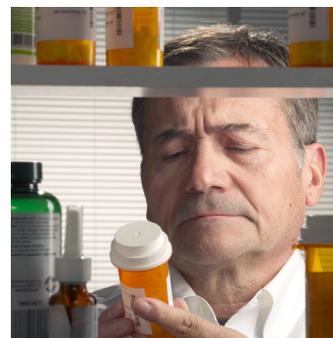


of 12th graders reported using an e-cigarette in the past 30 days. For the first time, more teens are using e-cigs than traditional cigarettes.

Notably, the FDA does not yet regulate the sale of e-cigs though they define them as devices that "turn chemicals, including highly addictive nicotine, into an aerosol that is inhaled by the user." The [National Institute of Drug Abuse](#) comments, "If the FDA moves to regulate all e-cigarettes, this will likely result in there being rules on safety, advertising, and warning labels, similar to those that currently govern tobacco cigarettes and other tobacco products. For now, e-cigarettes are not guaranteed to be safe. Consumers should not assume that the health claims made in advertisements by manufacturers are scientifically proven."

Talk to your teens about the potential risks of nicotine addiction with e-cigarettes. Maybe, just maybe, you can make sure they are not fooled once.

Grandparents: Tips from CDC on OTC



The Center for Disease Control offers some advice for grandparents about protecting their grandchildren from accidental use of OTC meds.

CDC advises, "Keep all medicines and vitamins up and away and out of sight in a high cabinet or other place inaccessible to your grandchildren. Keep purses, bags, or coats that have medicines or vitamins in them out of their reach and sight. Remember to never leave medicines or vitamins out on a table, countertop, or bedside table where your grandchildren could reach them — always make sure the caps are locked and put them away every time they are used."

For more on the CDC's efforts to prevent medicine misuse, check out its program, [Up and Away and Out of Sight](#).

