

**PEERx**

SHARE A DOSE OF REALITY:  
PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE IS DRUG ABUSE

# Educators Guide

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# PEERx Educators Guide

## Introduction

The purpose of the PEERx Educators Guide from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is to provide you with information and ideas for raising awareness about the dangers of prescription drug abuse among teens. This guide pulls together many of NIDA’s science-based materials about prescription drug abuse and offers suggestions for how to use them as complete lessons or as supplements to existing lesson plans.

The guide is divided into four parts.

- 1. Prescription Drug Abuse Facts:** This section provides an overview about prescription drug abuse, such as the definition of prescription drug abuse and facts about commonly abused prescription drugs. Also included are additional resources for more indepth information about how prescription drug abuse can affect the brain and body. This section can be used as background information as you prepare a lesson and as a resource for teens who are completing projects or who would like more information about prescription drug abuse.
- 2. Lesson Materials:** This section focuses mainly on the PEERx materials that provide engaging activities to help raise teen awareness about the dangers of prescription drug abuse. PEERx activities range from watching interactive videos to designing t-shirts.
- 3. Example Lesson Plans:** NIDA has developed several curricula about drug abuse and addiction. This section highlights lessons from two curricula—Mind Over Matter and *Brain Power!*—that focus on prescription drug abuse. These lessons can be used in full, supplemented with PEERx materials, or they can provide a template as you develop your own lesson about the dangers of prescription drug abuse.
- 4. Other Resources:** This section of the guide provides resources to help you and your students share the facts about prescription drug abuse with your community. You’ll find promotional tools such as social media and newsletter language about teen prescription drug abuse, infographics, and information about how to get involved in NIDA’s National Drug Facts Week, a national health observance during which schools and organizations across the country host events to teach teens the facts about drug abuse and addiction.

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## Background

### National Institute on Drug Abuse

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on how drug abuse affects the brain and body, including how it leads to addiction. In addition to supporting and conducting research, NIDA disseminates its findings through science-based materials such as Web sites, publications, and curricula supplements.

### Teen Prescription Drug Abuse and PEERx

Prescription drug abuse among teens is a significant problem. In 2014, the Monitoring the Future study reported that 13.9% of high school seniors used a prescription drug not prescribed for them or for nonmedical reasons in the past year.<sup>1</sup> Findings also showed that after marijuana, prescription and over-the-counter medications account for most of the top drugs abused by 12th graders in the past year, with Adderall and Vicodin being the most commonly abused prescription drugs.

In response to this serious public health problem, NIDA developed PEERx, an online educational initiative to discourage abuse of prescription drugs among teens. A component of the NIDA for Teens program, PEERx provides science-based information about prescription drug abuse prevention. PEERx has a variety of free resources, including Choose Your Path videos, which allow you to assume the role of the main character and make decisions about whether to abuse certain prescription drugs. PEERx also includes an Activity Guide for planning events in schools and communities, a partner toolkit, fact sheets about prescription drugs, and other helpful resources. Some of these resources are provided in this guide; for the full PEERx program visit <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx>.

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<sup>1</sup> Monitoring the Future 2012: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future/monitoring-future-survey-overview-findings-2012>

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## Prescription Drug Abuse Facts

This section of the PEER<sub>x</sub> Educators Guide defines prescription drug abuse, provides information about how many teens abuse prescription drugs, and provides important facts about the most abused prescription drugs. For detailed information and facts, reference the additional resources listed at the end of this section.

### What Is Prescription Drug Abuse?

Prescription drug abuse is when someone takes a medication in an inappropriate way, such as:

- Without a prescription
- In a way other than as prescribed
- For the “high” elicited

### Most Commonly Abused Prescription Drugs

Opioids (such as the pain relievers OxyContin and Vicodin), central nervous system depressants (e.g., Xanax, Valium), and stimulants (e.g., Concerta, Adderall) are commonly abused prescription drugs.

Medications available without a prescription—known as over-the-counter drugs—can also be abused. DXM (dextromethorphan), the active cough suppressant found in many over-the-counter cough and cold medications, is one example. It is sometimes abused to get high, which requires taking large and potentially dangerous doses.

### Number of Teens Abusing Prescription Drugs

For the latest trends in youth prescription drug abuse and perceived risk of prescription drug abuse, see NIDA’s Monitoring the Future study as well as the National Survey on Drug Use and Health from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

- The Monitoring the Future study is an annual survey of teens in grades 8, 10, and 12 that looks at drug abuse and perceptions of drug abuse among teens. For the latest results, visit <http://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future/monitoring-future-study-trends-in-prevalence-various-drugs>.
- The National Survey on Drug Use and Health is an annual survey of households in the United States that provides national and state-level data on the use of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs (including nonmedical use of prescription drugs), and mental health. For the latest results, visit <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH.aspx>.

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## Myths About Prescription Drugs

Teens often have misconceptions about prescription drugs that may contribute to the increased abuse of these drugs in recent years. These misconceptions include:

**Myth:** Prescription drugs are safer to abuse than other drugs because they are prescribed by a doctor.

**Fact:** When used as prescribed, these medications *are* safe and effective. However, with nonmedical use, the health effects of prescription drugs can be as dangerous as those experienced from illegal drug use. Doctors take many factors into account when prescribing a drug for a person who needs it: dose size, the person's weight and height, how long the drug should be taken, and much more. The bottom line is that drugs affect everyone differently.

**Myth:** Using stimulant medications prescribed for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)—such as Adderall and Ritalin—offer an academic edge (e.g., increased energy and focus).

**Fact:** Stimulant medications affect people with ADHD differently than people without ADHD. For people who do not have ADHD, stimulants flood the brain with dopamine, causing a dopamine overload. So instead of having a calming effect as they would on people with ADHD, stimulants taken without a medical reason can disrupt brain communication and cause [euphoria](#). Repeated abuse of stimulants can:

- Increase blood pressure, heart rate, and body temperature.
- Decrease appetite and sleep.
- Cause feelings of hostility and paranoia.
- Increase a person's risk for addiction.<sup>2</sup>

## Reasons for Abuse

Teens may cite a number of reasons to abuse prescription drugs, including:

- To get high
- To counter anxiety or sleep problems
- To boost their academic performance
- To help treat pain

## Availability

Many teens who use prescription drugs for nonmedical purposes get the drugs from a friend or relative, either for free, by buying them, or taking them without asking.

<sup>2</sup> Sara Bellum Blog: "Prescription Stimulants Affect People with ADHD Differently," <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/prescription-stimulants-affect-people-adhd-differently>

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## Prescription Opioids Key Facts

### Overview

Opioids are commonly prescribed to relieve pain. They are often prescribed by doctors after surgery or to help patients with severe acute or chronic pain. Studies have shown that if taken exactly as prescribed by a medical professional, opioids are safe, can manage pain effectively, and rarely cause addiction. The problem occurs when they are abused. In fact, painkillers are one of the most commonly abused drugs by teens after tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana.

Common opioids and their uses are listed below.

Type	Conditions They Treat	Common Street Names
<b>Oxycodone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OxyContin</li> <li>Percodan</li> <li>Percocet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Severe pain, often after surgery</li> <li>Chronic or acute pain</li> <li>Cough and diarrhea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hillbilly heroin, OC, oxy, percs, happy pills, or vikes</li> </ul>
<b>Hydrocodone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vicodin</li> <li>Lortab</li> <li>Lorcet</li> </ul>		
<b>Diphenoxylate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lomotil</li> </ul>		
<b>Morphine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kadian</li> <li>Avinza</li> <li>MS Contin</li> </ul>		
<b>Codeine</b>		
<b>Fentanyl</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duragesic</li> </ul>		
<b>Propoxyphene</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darvon</li> </ul>		
<b>Hydromorphone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dilaudid</li> </ul>		
<b>Meperidine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demerol</li> </ul>		
<b>Methadone</b>		

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## Effects on the Brain

Opioids attach to specific proteins called opioid receptors, which are found in the brain, spinal cord, gastrointestinal tract, and other organs. When opioid drugs attach to these receptors in certain brain regions, they can diminish the perception of pain.

Opioids can also cause a person to feel relaxed and euphoric by affecting areas of the brain connected with how we perceive pleasure. These feelings can be intensified when opioids are abused. Repeated abuse of opioids can lead to addiction—compulsive drug seeking and abuse despite known harmful consequences.

## Negative Effects

Opioids can produce drowsiness, cause constipation, and, depending on the amount taken, affect a person's ability to breathe properly. In fact, taking just one large dose could cause severe breathing complications or death.

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## Central Nervous System Depressants Key Facts

### Overview

Central nervous system (CNS)—the brain and spinal cord—depressants slow down (or “depress”) the normal activity that goes on in the brain. Doctors often prescribe them for people who are anxious or can’t sleep. When taken as directed, they can be safe and helpful. But when people take someone else’s prescription drugs or take the drugs for entertainment or pleasure, they may experience dangerous consequences.

Common CNS depressants and their uses are listed below.

Type	Conditions They Treat	Common Street Names
<b>Barbiturates</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mephobarbital (Mebaral)</li><li>• Sodium pentobarbital (Nembutal)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seizure disorders</li><li>• Surgical procedures</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Barbs, reds, red birds, phennies, tooies, yellows, or yellow jackets</li></ul>
<b>Benzodiazepines</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diazepam (Valium)</li><li>• Alprazolam (Xanax)</li><li>• Estazolam (ProSom)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acute stress reactions</li><li>• Panic attacks</li><li>• Convulsions</li><li>• Sleep disorders</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Candy, downers, sleeping pills, or tranks</li></ul>
<b>Sleep Medications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Zolpidem (Ambien)</li><li>• Zaleplon (Sonata)</li><li>• Eszopiclone (Lunesta)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sleep disorders</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A-minus or zombie pills</li></ul>

### Effects on the Brain

Most CNS depressants affect the brain in the same way—they enhance the activity of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), a naturally occurring chemical in the brain that sends messages between cells. GABA works by slowing down brain activity. Although different classes of CNS depressants work in unique ways, they ultimately increase GABA activity, which produces a drowsy or calming effect.

### Negative Effects

Although CNS depressants can help people suffering from seizures, anxiety, or sleep disorders, they can be addictive and should be used only as prescribed. During the first few days of taking a CNS depressant, a person usually feels sleepy and uncoordinated. With continuing use, the body becomes accustomed to these effects, and they lessen. This is known as tolerance, which means that larger doses are needed to achieve the same initial effects. Continued use can lead to physical dependence and, when stopped, withdrawal.

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## Prescription Stimulants Key Facts

### Overview

As their name suggests, prescription stimulants increase—or “stimulate”—activities and processes in the body. This increased activity can boost alertness, attention, and energy. It also can raise a person’s blood pressure and heart rate. In the past, stimulants were used to treat a variety of conditions, including asthma and other respiratory problems, obesity, and neurological disorders. As their potential for abuse and addiction became apparent, doctors began to prescribe them less often. Now, stimulants are prescribed for treating only a few health conditions, including ADHD, narcolepsy (a sleep disorder), and, in some instances, depression that has not responded to other treatments.

Common stimulants and their uses are listed below.

Type	Conditions They Treat	Common Street Names
<b>Dextroamphetamine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dexedrine</li><li>• Adderall</li></ul> <b>Methylphenidate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ritalin</li><li>• Concerta</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ADHD</li><li>• Narcolepsy (sleep disorder)</li><li>• Depression</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skippy, the smart drug, vitamin r, bennies, black beauties, roses, hearts, speed, uppers</li></ul>

### Effects on the Brain

The brain is made up of nerve cells that send messages to each other by releasing chemicals called neurotransmitters. Common stimulants, such as amphetamines (e.g., Adderall) and methylphenidate (e.g., Ritalin), have chemical structures that are similar to certain key brain neurotransmitters called monoamines, including dopamine and norepinephrine. Stimulants enhance the effects of these chemicals in the brain and body.

When doctors prescribe stimulants, they start with low doses and increase them gradually until they fully treat the condition for which they are prescribed. However, when taken in doses and by routes other than those prescribed (e.g., snorting or injecting), stimulants can increase the dopamine in the brain very quickly, disrupting normal communication between brain cells, producing euphoria, and increasing the risk of addiction.

### Negative Effects

Stimulant abuse can be extremely dangerous. Taking high doses of a stimulant can cause an irregular heartbeat, dangerously high body temperatures, and the potential for heart failure or seizures. For some people, taking high doses of certain stimulants, or repeatedly abusing them, can lead to feelings of hostility or paranoia.

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## More Resources About the Effects of Prescription Drug Abuse

The NIDA for Teens Web site provides detailed fact sheets written for teens about prescription drugs. These fact sheets can be found at the following URLs and used online or printed as handouts.

- Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications Fact Sheet: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/prescription-drugs>
- Prescription Opioids Fact Sheet: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/opioids-and-pain-reliever-facts>
- Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants Fact Sheet: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/central-nervous-system-cns-depressants-facts>
- Prescription Stimulants Fact Sheet: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/prescription-stimulants>
- Dextromethorphan Fact Sheet: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/dextromethorphan-dxm-and-cold-medicine-facts>

In addition to the NIDA for Teens prescription drug fact sheets, NIDA provides several publications about prescription drugs and the effects of their abuse. These publications can be found online or in the appendix of this guide.

- Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications (DrugFacts)
  - Online: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/prescription-over-counter-medications>
  - Page 1 of the appendix
- Commonly Abused Prescription Drugs Chart
  - Online: [http://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/rx\\_drugs\\_placemat\\_508c\\_10052011.pdf](http://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/rx_drugs_placemat_508c_10052011.pdf)
  - Page 4 of the appendix
- Prescription Drugs: Abuse and Addiction (Research Report)
  - Online: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/prescription-drugs>
  - Page 6 of the appendix
- Stimulant ADHD Medications—Methylphenidate and Amphetamines (DrugFacts)
  - Online: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/stimulant-adhd-medications-methylphenidate-amphetamines>
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## Partner Success Story: Drug Education Council

The Drug Education Council, a partner agency of the Baldwin County United Way and the United Way of Southwest Alabama, is dedicated to promoting a drug-free society, preventing chemical dependency, and providing quality education, information, and intervention programs.

As part of NIDA's 2013 National Drug Facts Week, the Drug Education Council held a press conference and a Prescription Drug Abuse Summit. These events brought together local experts to discuss the growing problem of youth prescription drug abuse. The PEER<sub>x</sub> materials were shared as examples of how educators could raise awareness of the issue among teens.

The event gained local media attention and resulted in a proclamation by the Alabama Governor, Robert Bentley, supporting National Drug Facts Week and the efforts of the Drug Education Council to raise awareness about prescription drug abuse.

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## Lesson Materials

This section of the PEERx Educators Guide describes various activities and materials related to prescription drug abuse that can be used to engage teens. You'll find:

- Articles to start a conversation about prescription drug abuse
- Interactive videos that teens can use to understand the negative consequences of abusing prescription drugs
- Creative activities such as developing public service announcements (PSAs) and t-shirts to help spread the word about the dangers of prescription drug abuse
- Posts from NIDA's Sara Bellum Blog, which is written for teens and includes short, topical posts about drug abuse, brain science, and addiction. Often, guest bloggers write posts about their drug abuse prevention efforts. You can use the blog as an educational tool either by asking students to respond to a post or to write a new post for submission to NIDA.

## Starting a Discussion

In collaboration with Scholastic, NIDA developed a series of short articles each with an accompanying teacher's guide about different aspects of prescription drug abuse. These articles are part of the *Heads Up: Real News About Drugs and Your Body* lesson supplements series. Each article provides background information and key facts that can help teens learn about the topic. The teacher's guide provides tips and discussion questions for facilitating the conversation. A poster illustrates the key dangers of prescription drug abuse.

1. "Straight Talk on Prescription Drugs" is a teen reporter's interview with NIDA Director Nora D. Volkow, M.D., about prescription drug abuse. The article discusses questions such as "What are the effects of prescription drug abuse—either one-time or long-term use?" and "What is the likelihood of someone becoming addicted to prescription drugs?"
2. "Prescription Pain Medications: Just Because a Doctor Prescribes Them Doesn't Mean They Are Safe To Abuse" explains what prescription opioids are, why they require a prescription, and the dangers of abusing them.
3. "Prescription Stimulants" describes what prescription stimulants are, why they help people with ADHD, why they require a prescription, and the danger of abusing them.

The compilation also includes an online scavenger hunt that encourages teens to explore the *Heads Up: Real News About Drugs and Your Body* Web pages to answer questions about the myths and facts of prescription drug abuse.

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## Complete Heads Up: Real News About Drugs And Your Body Materials

The complete *Heads Up: Real News About Drugs and Your Body* prescription drug compilation can be found online and in the appendix of this guide.

- Student articles:
  - Online: [http://www.scholastic.com/smp/pdfs/nida/NIDA9-Stu\\_Comp.pdf](http://www.scholastic.com/smp/pdfs/nida/NIDA9-Stu_Comp.pdf)
  - Page 26 of the appendix
- Scholastic Teacher's Guide:
  - Online: [http://www.scholastic.com/smp/pdfs/nida/NIDA9-TE\\_Comp.pdf](http://www.scholastic.com/smp/pdfs/nida/NIDA9-TE_Comp.pdf)
  - Page 38 of the appendix
- Prescription drug abuse poster:
  - Online: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/rxdrugsposter.pdf>
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## Choose Your Path Interactive Videos

The Choose Your Path activity includes two interactive videos that allow teens to assume the role of the main character and make decisions about whether to abuse prescription drugs, such as Xanax or Adderall. After each scene, the viewer selects what the main character will do next and sees the results of that decision. The videos illustrate realistic scenarios in which teens might be confronted with a decision about whether to abuse prescription drugs.

These videos highlight everyday pressures that affect teens. Having teens control the videos and make decisions throughout the storyline reinforces that they can make positive choices on their own.

### How It Works

First, a video clip sets up the scenario. At the end of each scene, viewers choose between two different paths. After viewers make their selection, the chosen scenario plays out. The video can be restarted to explore the outcomes of different decisions.

These questions can accompany your discussion after watching the Choose Your Path videos:

1. What would you do if faced with the same situations as the characters?
2. What are safe ways for the main characters to react to the stressful situations they face?
3. What are the dangers of taking a friend's or family member's prescription drugs?

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## Choose Your Path: BFF or the Ex?

Find this video at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/videos/choose-your-path/bff-or-ex>.

Depending on which path you take in this video, a teenager is offered either Xanax or Vicodin by a friend.

Xanax is a central nervous system (CNS) depressant prescribed to people for anxiety and sleeping problems. [CNS depressants](#) slow down the normal activity in the brain; when abused, they can have dangerous consequences. Most CNS depressants affect the brain in the same way—they enhance the activity of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), a naturally occurring chemical in the brain that sends messages between cells. GABA works by slowing down brain activity. Although different classes of CNS depressants work in unique ways, they ultimately increase GABA activity, which produces a drowsy or calming effect.

Vicodin is an [opioid](#) prescribed to people to treat pain. Opioids are often prescribed by doctors after surgery or to help patients with severe acute or chronic pain. Opioid prescriptions are also known as “painkillers” or “pain meds.”

Opioids affect the brain in the same way as illicit opiates like heroin. Studies have shown that if taken exactly as prescribed by a medical professional, opioids are safe, can manage pain effectively, and rarely cause addiction. The problem occurs when they are abused.

Opioids attach to specific proteins called opioid receptors, which are found in the brain, spinal cord, gastrointestinal tract, and other organs. When opioid drugs attach to these receptors in certain brain regions, they can diminish the perception of pain. Opioids can produce drowsiness, cause constipation, and, depending on the amount taken, affect a person’s ability to breathe properly. In fact, taking just one large dose could cause severe breathing problems or death. Repeated abuse of opioids can lead to addiction—seeking out and using the drug over and over despite known harmful effects.

Play the video to find out what might happen if someone takes Xanax or Vicodin not prescribed for them.

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## Choose Your Path: The Big Test

In this video, a teenager must decide whether to abuse Adderall when he is preparing for a test. Adderall is a stimulant medication prescribed to people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Stimulants increase activity in the body, such as increasing a person's heart rate and the release of dopamine in the brain. When stimulants are abused, this fast release of dopamine can increase a person's chances of becoming addicted.

Stimulant abuse can be extremely dangerous. Taking high doses of a stimulant can cause an irregular heartbeat, dangerously high body temperatures, and the potential for heart failure or seizures. For some people, taking high doses of certain stimulants, or repeatedly abusing them, can lead to feelings of hostility or paranoia.

Play the video to find out what might happen if someone takes Adderall not prescribed for them.

## Complete Choose Your Path Videos

Both videos can be found at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/choose-your-path>.

## Create Your Own Interactive Video

The PEER<sub>x</sub> activity Peer Into Your Path provides step-by-step instructions for teens to create their own Choose Your Path storylines. In doing so, teens have to think about the effects of prescription drugs and the scenarios in which teens might abuse them. This allows them not only to learn about the dangers of abusing prescription drugs, but also to think about how they might react when faced with the opportunity to abuse drugs. Following you will find the complete activity instructions. A blank decision tree for this activity can be found online and in the appendix of this guide.

## Activity Instructions

### 1. Get creative!

Now that you've explored the different paths and fully understand the power of decision-making, you're ready to create your very own Choose Your Path adventure. This activity is a great opportunity for you to flex your creativity and writing skills. Just use the facts on the PEER<sub>x</sub> Web site about prescription drug abuse to make your storyline as compelling as possible. You have a lot of options: write about a typical day in the life of a teen and tap into your own experiences for ideas. Or, you can create a story about someone whose life is totally different from yours or your friends'. Make sure you weave in [facts about the dangers of prescription drug abuse](#).

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## 2. Fill in a decision tree.

Use the blank [decision tree](#) to help you outline your story. This helps you navigate your own story about abusing prescription drugs, just like the official Choose Your Path videos. Start by typing in the boxes to develop your story, or print the tree and hand write your ideas in the boxes. You can use all the same characters from Choose Your Path or create your own!

Don't forget that these video adventures are shot from the main character's point of view, meaning that you see things as they happen through the eyes of the main character. Basically, any person watching or reading this storyline is the main character.

## 3. Make sure to include two paths.

Your Choose Your Path adventure should start off with one decision, such as should you go on a date with Mario? Or not? Should you miss the bus and take a ride from a friend? Should you say hi to that cute boy or girl at the mall? Let your imagination run wild! Remember that in every scene your reader should be faced with two decisions. One decision should have a negative consequence of abusing prescription drugs and another outcome based on a healthier decision. Just remember, at the end of your story, you will need to have outcomes based on the decisions that you made. The decisions are yours!

## 4. Lights, camera, action!

If you like, take it one step further. Bring your adventure to life! Grab a camera, some friends to be your actors, and find or make the props you need to videotape one or more of the scenes in your story.

## 5. Share your masterpiece.

Share your written storyline or put your video on YouTube and send your masterpiece our way! Email your Choose Your Path adventure to [peerx@iqsolutions.com](mailto:peerx@iqsolutions.com).

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## Complete Peer Into Your Path Instructions and Downloads

Find the complete Peer Into Your Path Activity:

- Online: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/peer-into-your-path>
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## Partner Success Story: Operation UNITE

Operation UNITE is a nonprofit organization serving 32 counties in Kentucky by providing narcotics investigations, substance abuse treatment and referrals, youth programs, family support, and community education initiatives. Its recent prescription drug abuse prevention efforts in schools offer a replicable strategy for other organizations seeking to reach teens about this critical public health issue.

During NIDA's 2013 National Drug Facts Week, Operation UNITE held events in collaboration with school anti-drug clubs to educate students about the dangers of prescription drug abuse. Organizers used PEERx resources, including the interactive Choose Your Path videos, which allowed students to assume the role of the main character and make decisions about whether to abuse prescription drugs, such as Adderall or Xanax. Students selected which path to take and watched the consequences of that decision play out on screen.

Students also developed skits, and one group even wrote their own rap, using only information from the PEERx Web site. They acted out their skits and selected the best one to present to the entire school. Through these efforts, Operation UNITE reached 750 students and teachers.

# PEERx Educators Guide

## Activities

The PEERx initiative provides suggestions for a number of activities for teens, as part of the PEERx Activity Guide, to help teach and reinforce information about the dangers of prescription drug abuse. These activities can be used as part of a lesson or as events themselves.

Following is a list of the different activities with brief descriptions of each.

- **Wear the Message:** Have students bring in t-shirts or other clothing items and use NIDA's Downloads Creator to iron on designs. Students also can personalize their own iron-on shirts with their own messages.
  - Find detailed instructions for this activity on the PEERx Web site: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/get-involved/wear>
  - For a complete list of the PEERx downloads, visit <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/downloads>
- **Hold a School Assembly:** There's no better way to spread the word throughout your school about the dangers of prescription drug abuse than to hold an assembly that everyone can attend.
  - Find detailed instructions for this activity on the PEERx Web site: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/get-involved/assemble>
- **Predict the Future:** Make Prescription Drug Abuse Fortune Tellers to show the possible side effects of abusing prescription drugs.
  - Find detailed instructions for this activity on the PEERx Web site: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/get-involved/predict>
  - Find a sample fortune teller on page 68 of the appendix.
- **Write and Broadcast a Radio PSA:** Write radio public service announcements (PSAs), record them, and pick the best one. Then contact local radio stations to ask them to play the winning PSA or to interview the student with the winning project.
  - Find detailed instructions for this activity on the PEERx Web site: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/get-involved/broadcast>
- **Host a "Relieve the Stress Fest!":** Demonstrate a variety of simple stress reduction techniques.
  - Find detailed instructions for this activity on the PEERx Web site: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/get-involved/de-stress>

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- **Create a Classroom Crime Scene Investigation:** Start at the end where a teen is in the hospital as a result of prescription drug abuse. Work backward to find out what drug the person took.
  - Find detailed instructions for this activity on the PEERx Web site:  
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/get-involved/investigate>
- **Participate in Drug Facts Chat Day:** Encourage students to participate in Chat Day by asking the scientists the best questions.
  - Find detailed instructions for this activity on the PEERx Web site:  
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx/get-involved/chat>
- **Hold an Art or Poster Design Contest:** Students' posters should show the effects of prescription drug abuse on the brain. Display the most compelling posters around your school.
  - Find detailed instructions for this activity on the PEERx Web site:  
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/get-involved/design>
- **Issue a Proclamation for Prescription Drug Abuse Awareness Day:** A proclamation is a great way to spread the word!
  - Find detailed instructions for this activity on the PEERx Web site:  
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/get-involved/proclaim>

## Complete Activity Guide

Find the PEERx Activity Guide:

- Online: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/get-involved>
- Page 48 of the appendix

## Partner Success Story: California Health Collaborative

The California Health Collaborative serves the needs of individuals with limited access to health care resources. Their Lock It Up Project is a community-based prevention project that raises awareness of the risks associated with prescription drug abuse among youth and young adults in Fresno County, California.

The California Health Collaborative, as part of its Lock It Up project, developed a curriculum to raise awareness about prescription drug abuse. The curriculum is taught to teens by college students in Fresno area high schools. The PEERx Choose Your Path videos are included in the curriculum unit on "Refusal Strategies" and the PEERx Activity Guide is included in the appendix.

# PEERx Educators Guide

## Sara Bellum Blog Posts About Prescription Drugs

A team of NIDA scientists and science writers created the Sara Bellum Blog to connect teens in middle and high school with the latest scientific research and news about drug abuse and addiction. Since its creation in 2009, the Sara Bellum Blog has covered a wide range of topics related to drug abuse and addiction, including facts about drugs of abuse, peer pressure, and mental health. NIDA publishes one or two posts each week, and the latest post can be found at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog>.

Sara Bellum Blog posts about prescription drug abuse can be used as additional reading or as information sources on specific aspects of teen prescription drug abuse. You can assign students to respond to a post or to write a new post for submission to NIDA.

Following is a list of several topical posts, links to the original posts, and a brief summary.

- During National Drug Facts Week: The Truth About Prescription Drugs
  - Did you know that prescription and over-the-counter drugs are the most commonly abused substances by high school seniors (after marijuana and alcohol)?
  - Full post: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/truth-about-prescription-drugs>
- Medications and Alcohol Don't Mix
  - If you take any medications—either those prescribed by a doctor or over-the-counter cold and allergy medicine—it's not a good idea to drink alcohol. Often, the medication label will warn you not to—because of the possible dangerous side effects.
  - Full post: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/medications-and-alcohol-dont-mix>
- Prescription Stimulants Affect People With ADHD Differently
  - Prescriptions are only meant to be taken by the person who was proscribed them, at the dosage prescribed, because prescriptions help treat certain conditions and do not have the same effects on everyone.
  - Full post: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/prescription-stimulants-affect-people-adhd-differently>
- Prescription Drugs on TV
  - Did you know that the United States and New Zealand are the only countries in the world that allow prescription drug companies to market medications directly to the public?
  - Full post: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/prescription-drugs-tv>

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- Girls and Boys Have Different Reasons for Prescription Drug Use
  - Teenage girls are now more likely than boys to abuse prescription drugs like pain pills and ADHD medications. The thing is—they have different reasons for doing so.
  - Full post: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/girls-and-boys-have-different-reasons-prescription-drug-use>

## Additional Posts Related to Prescription Drug Abuse

Find additional Sara Bellum Blog posts about prescription drugs at the following links.

- Blog Category “Prescription Drug Abuse”: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/category/prescription-drug-abuse>
- Blog Tag “Prescription Drugs”: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/category/343>
- Blog Tag “Prescription Drug Abuse”: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/category/342>
- Blog Tag “PEERx”: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/category/341>

# PEERx Educators Guide

## Example Lesson Plans

Two of NIDA's curricula offer materials about prescription drug abuse. *Mind Over Matter* is for grades 5–9 and *Brain Power!* is for grades 6–9. These lessons can be used in full, in part, or as an outline for developing your own lesson about prescription drug abuse.

### Mind Over Matter (Grades 5–9)

The *Mind Over Matter* lesson on prescription drug abuse defines the problem and talks about the effects prescription drugs can have on the brain and body. The character, a fictional youth scientist, leads students through an exploration of what prescription drugs are and how they can affect the brain and body.

#### Complete Lesson

The information from the lesson is summarized in a short magazine about prescription drugs that can be found:

- Online: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/PrescriptionDrugs.pdf>
- Page 70 of the appendix

A step-by-step outline of the lesson plan is also online at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/educators/curricula-and-lesson-plans/mind-over-matter/prescription-drug-abuse>.

### Brain Power! (Grades 6–9)

*Brain Power!*, a curriculum with six modules, discusses prescription drug abuse in the third module called, “Drugs in the Cupboard.” This module explains how prescription drugs and some household products can damage the brain and body when used improperly.

#### Complete Lesson

Find this module:

- Online: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/brain-power/grades-6-9/drugs-in-cupboard-module-3>
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# PEERx Educators Guide

## Partners Toolkit

NIDA has partnered with a number of Federal, national, state, and local organizations to help raise awareness about the dangers of teen prescription drug abuse. To support their efforts, NIDA provides an online toolkit with social media language, drop-in articles, and Web badges at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/peerx-partner-toolkit>.

## Other Resources

Through the PEERx program, NIDA has developed a number of additional materials and partnerships that you may find helpful as you seek to educate teens about the danger of prescription drug abuse.

### Partner Resources

- The PEERx Partner Toolkit provides social media messages and background information about prescription drugs and PEERx: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx/peerx-partner-toolkit>.
- A spotlight on how PEERx partners raise awareness about the dangers of prescription drug abuse and a full list of PEERx partners can be found at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx/peerx-partners>.

### Additional Materials

- In April 2013, NIDA wrote a guest blog post about the dangers of teen prescription drug abuse for the National Education Association's Health Information Network: <http://www.neahin.org/blog/teen-prescription-drug-abuse.html>.
- In November 2012, NIDA discussed the rise and dangers of teen prescription drug abuse with the American School Counselor Association as part of their ASCAway program. The complete podcast can be found at <http://ascaway.podbean.com/2012/11/16/ascaway-teen-prescription-drug-abuse>.
- NIDA's Easy-to-Read Drug Facts Web site provides a plain language fact sheet about the dangers of opioid prescription drugs: <http://www.easyread.drugabuse.gov/painkiller-abuse-facts.php>.

### NIDA Infographics

NIDA has developed several infographics about teen prescription drug abuse that can be found on the NIDA Web site. These infographics are listed from newest to oldest. Please note that older infographics may not reflect the latest drug abuse statistics.

- Online: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/infographics>.
- Sample infographics: Pages 83-86 of the appendix.

# PEER<sub>x</sub> Educators Guide

## Keep in Touch!

If you decide to use the NIDA for Teens resources, please let us know. We are very interested in hearing how educators use these resources. We can also provide further information and answer questions.

Email us at [peerx@iqsolutions.com](mailto:peerx@iqsolutions.com).

## National Drug Facts Week

Another opportunity to raise awareness about teen prescription drug abuse in your community is to take part in National Drug Facts Week. Each year, National Drug Facts Week takes place at the end of January and is a week during which schools and communities organize events to help teens learn the facts about drug abuse and addiction. The PEER<sub>x</sub> activities are great event ideas for National Drug Facts Week.

Learn more about National Drug Facts Week at <http://drugfactsweek.drugabuse.gov/index.php>.