

Opioid & Stimulant Risks for Staten Island Youth

Understanding the risks of non-medical opioid/stimulant and illicit drug use

Though there has been a lot of progress locally, data shows that prescription drug use is still an issue among teens and young adults on Staten Island in addition to drugs like heroin, crack/cocaine, and methamphetamines. TYSA continues to work on limiting the supply of drugs for youth use and changing the conditions that put our young people at risk for use.

Prescription drugs typically have practical and necessary uses, and are important in treating and managing different conditions -- for example, prescription opioids can be useful in managing acute pain that results from a sports injury or following surgery, and prescription stimulants can be used to manage conditions like ADHD and narcolepsy. However, when these prescription drugs are not used as prescribed, there can be dangerous side effects that put the individual at risk of forming a substance use disorder. Your children could potentially find these prescription drugs in your medicine cabinet at home, or get them from friends and classmates that think they're helping by offering to share medications. Other more illicit drugs like crack/cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines may also be much more readily available than you might think. Youth with certain lived experiences such as Black or Latinx youth, youth identifying as LGBTQ+, youth that have a parent or caregiver who had or currently has a mental health or substance use disorder, and/or youth that have experienced a traumatic event (such deaths related to COVID-19 or long periods of social isolation), may be at increased risk. If any of these apply to your child, don't panic! Please read below to learn more about the types of drugs that Staten Island youth are exposed to and how to prevent drug use in your home.

Prescription Opioids

- Prescription opioids are commonly prescribed by doctors to treat acute pain, and include drugs such as Codeine, Demerol, OxyContin, Oxycodone, Percocet, Tramadol, Vicodin, and others. Under a doctor's orders, these medications can treat acute pain from medical procedures. However, they can also lead to accidental overdose if used incorrectly and potentially, opioid addiction.
- In 2017, 7.8% of high school students citywide reported misusing prescription opioids in the past year. By comparison, only 6.6% of high school students in Staten Island reported past year use, although as much as 8.1% of SI's LatinX students and 9.2% of SI's Black students reported past year use. (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017)
- 29.0% of SI youth who misuse opioids get them from their own home. And 42.9% of youth who misuse opioids say they get them from a friend or relative, so it isn't enough to simply remove them from the home environment. (Youth Development Survey, 2018)

Prescription Stimulants

- Prescription stimulants are commonly prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy (uncontrollable episodes of deep sleep). Stimulants increase alertness, attention, and energy, and for these reasons, can be attractive to students and young people who are looking for ways to manage the stresses of academic pressure.
- In 2017, 5.8% of high school students citywide reported misusing prescriptions stimulants in the past year. By comparison, only 4.7% of high school students in Staten Island reported past year use, although as much as 6.2% SI's LatinX students reported past year use. (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017)

Illicit Drugs

- Heroin: Heroin is an illicit drug derived from morphine, and as a result is several times **more potent** than the prescription pain medications described above; subsequently, they also pose a great risk for overdose. Heroin can be introduced to the body in various ways, but include smoking, intravenous injection (IV drug use), snorting, ingestion, and as a suppository. Many current users of heroin report that they began their opioid use with prescription pain medication; since heroin is typically more affordable and, in some cases, easier to obtain than prescription medications, people who use opioids that start out with prescription pain medications can progress to heroin use, which puts them at greater risk for an overdose.
 - In 2019, 5.5% of high school students citywide reported having ever used heroin at least once in their lifetimes. By comparison, 9.3% of high school students in Staten Island reported lifetime use, and as much as 13.1% of SI’s LatinX students and 12.4% of SI’s Black students reported lifetime use. (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019)
- Crack/Cocaine:
 - In 2019, 5.0% of high school students citywide reported having ever used cocaine at least once in their lifetimes. Similarly, 7.4% of high school students in Staten Island reported lifetime use, and as much as 10.6% of SI’s LatinX students and 7.5% of SI’s Black students reported lifetime use. (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019)
- Methamphetamine:
 - In 2019, 4.9% of high school students citywide reported having ever used heroin at least once in their lifetimes. By comparison, 7.5% of high school students in Staten Island reported lifetime use, and as much as 11.7% of SI’s LatinX students and 8.7% of SI’s Black students reported lifetime use. (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019)

What are the signs that I should look out for?

SIGNS OF USE	SIGNS OF OVERDOSE
<i>*These signs and symptoms may look different for different drugs.</i>	<i>*If you see any of these signs, this is an emergency. Call 911 immediately.</i>
Watery eyes / Pinpoint or dilated pupils	May not awaken when try to wake them
Chills	Cold, clammy skin
Disorientation	Blue lips, face, hands
Anxiety/irritability	Struggling to breathe
Loss of appetite/nausea	Elevated body temperature
Depression	Vomiting
Forgetfulness	Behaving irrationally/confused
Can't account for long periods of time	
Neglect responsibilities	
Change in daily habits	
Change in appearance	
Change in personality	
Social withdrawal	
Increased sensitivity	
Increased absence / Receiving lower grades	
Changes in sleep habits like insomnia or long periods	

of sleep	
Missing or bent spoons, cut straws/pens, rolled bills, or brass scouring pads	

Take Action!

- ❖ **Ask:** Talk to your child’s doctor about the risks associated with opioids and other prescription drugs and to explore pain management alternatives. If you’re worried that your child may be using drugs, contact a trusted resource at their school (examples listed below) and ask for support.
- ❖ **Know:** Knowledge is power. Know what medications your student is using. Know the signs of drug use and overdose. Know who your child is with. Consider using GPS apps to check in with your child so that you know where your child is.
- ❖ **Monitor:** The adult in the household should maintain possession of the medication and closely monitor the dosage and refills. Although most youth are capable of self-administering over-the-counter medications, prescription opioids and stimulants should be closely supervised by an adult. Set clear rules with your medications! Other substances like alcohol and marijuana should also be monitored in the home.

It is also key to monitor your child’s social media pages. Many social media channels have direct message functions as well. Monitoring social media is an important part of knowing your child’s environment.

- ❖ **Talk:** Discuss the dangers of prescription medications with your child. Emphasize that just because they are prescribed by a doctor, it does not make them harmless! Never share, take more than prescribed, or mix with alcohol and other drugs. Sharing medication is dangerous and illegal.

Communication is key to all aspects of your relationship with your child, especially as your child becomes a teen and starts to rely more on their friends for social support than their parents.

- ❖ **Lock up & safely dispose of your meds:** Keep all prescription medications locked up to keep your family and friends safe. When the prescription is no longer needed, dispose of the unused medications using a drug deactivation pouch or at any drug drop box location. Visit www.TYSA.NYC for all drop box locations. Though legal, alcohol and cannabis (or marijuana) are also drugs, and adults that use alcohol and cannabis in the home should make sure that they are safely stored, and locked if possible, away from children.

- ❖ **Carry Narcan:** Fentanyl is a manufactured opioid that is many times stronger (and more dangerous) than even morphine or heroin. Recently, lab analysis of confiscated/recovered drugs across NYC has revealed that fentanyl is present in all types of drugs. Using Narcan can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, and has no negative/adverse side effects if used in instances where opioids are not present. If you come across



someone who is unresponsive and exhibiting the signs of use described above, using Narcan can save their lives. When in doubt, use Narcan. Visit our [webpage](#) for more information on how to get trained.

Resources

- In the school:
 - Substance Abuse Prevention Intervention Specialist (SAPIS)
 - School-Based Health Center
 - Guidance Counselors
 - Social Workers
- <https://drugfree.org/get-support-now/>: Get personalized help & hope by text, find information on signs to look for, find treatment & recovery resources, learn how to keep yourself & family healthy, and find support from other parents.
- [TYSA.NYC](#): Get help, be informed, take action. Learn more about TYSA.
- [SIHOPE.org](#): One-stop-shop for those battling addiction, those with a loved one who is struggling, or those who simply want to get involved in helping end the crisis.
- [Nyc.gov/nycwell](#): Free, confidential mental health support. Speak to a counselor via phone, text, or chat, and get access to mental health and substance use services, in more than 200 languages, 24/7/365.



I have reviewed and understand the symptoms and warning signs of prescription drug misuse.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Print Parent/Guardian's Name

____/____/____
Date