

# The Opioid Crisis is a Public Health Emergency

**Opioids** include common pain medications, such as OxyContin and Percocet. Misuse of these medications can lead to heroin use.

## Be a good role model

Young people who see their parents drinking, using drugs, or misusing medicine are at an increased risk for developing substance abuse problems themselves.

## Keep track of medications:

### Lock up all prescription drugs.

Use a safe or a lockbox that's bolted to something that cannot be moved. You need to be the only person who can get into it.

### Keep an eye on how many pills you have.

Use a log or a calendar to track the number of pills you should have left.

### Never share a prescription medication.

Sharing medication isn't safe, even if you're just trying to help a loved one feel better. 70% of the time, people start using opioids because a friend or family member gave them a pill. If your loved one is in pain, send them to the doctor instead.

### Medication disposal:

If you're done with a prescription and still have some pills left, don't keep them around the house. One easy way to get rid of them is to bring them to a Med Return Drug Collection Box.

The Belchertown Police Station has a collection box in its lobby, as do other area police departments.

### Make sure your kids know about risks of using substances

like alcohol, illegal drugs, and medicine that is not prescribed to them. Abusing substances is especially harmful to children and teens, since their brains are still developing (and will keep developing until age 25). The earlier a young person starts using drugs or alcohol, the more likely they are to develop addiction as they get older.

However, you can make a difference. Kids who learn about the risks of substances from their parents are less likely to use. Start talking and keep talking.

### Don't use substances to manage your own stress.

Show your kids healthier ways to cope. Try exercise, yoga or meditation; talking to a friend or therapist; spending time in nature, or just doing something fun — like playing a game or watching a funny movie.

Get more tips and information online from the [Parent Toolkit at the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids](#)

Thank you to Hampshirehope.org for the tips.