



## The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System

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Designated regional poison center  
for New Jersey by New Jersey  
Department of Health and Senior  
Services and the American  
Association of Poison Control  
Centers

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### PRESS RELEASE

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## Are your teens “Pharming?” or Who’s in Your Medicine Cabinet?

**(Newark, NJ)** - Today’s drug deals don’t just happen on the street, they may happen in your home. A trend in teen drug abuse is to raid the medicine cabinet for whatever pills they can find. Teens do not have to rely on the shady character hanging out on street corners, back alleys, or dingy cars to provide them with a means to get high. There are medications readily available in their homes which can produce a “real high.”

The term “pharming” refers to the use of prescription and over-the-counter products found in the home to get a high. **Where do they get these medications?** They get it from the medicine cabinets in the homes of parents and grandparents; homes where they babysit; local supermarkets; pharmacies; anywhere medicines can be found. Pharming may be the most “cost-effective” way for a teen to get high! Furthermore, these medications by themselves are “legal”.

**What do they do with these medications?** There are “pharming parties” during which a group of teens congregate to party and share whatever pills they have been able to “pharm” from their homes. Teens then consume dangerous drug cocktails by mixing prescription and over-the-counter medications with alcohol or marijuana. Pharming parties are on the rise overshadowing both marijuana and meth use.

According to Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., “Since January, the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES) has received over 90 calls for assistance in managing teenagers exposed to medications to get high, the majority of these cases involved prescription and over-the-counter products. Prescribed ADHD medications appear to be the most abused followed by medications for sleep, anxiety, or pain. The most common over-the-counter medications include antihistamines and cough and cold preparations containing Dextromethorphan.

It is important to talk to teens about the appropriate use of prescription and over-the-counter products. They need to know that just because these medications are “legal” and may be prescribed by a doctor, they still have dangerous side effects. There are more deaths in the state from unintentional overdoses of drugs than motor vehicle accidents! “NJPIES strongly recommends monitoring teen use of prescription/over-the-counter products and discarding any unused or expired medications. We are told to lock up the medicine cabinet with young children – why did we stop with our teens?” said Dr. Ruck.

For immediate treatment advice, as well as for prevention information, call the NJ Poison Help Hotline at 1-800-222-1222. Trained medical professionals handle all calls. We are accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week! Services are free and confidential. Hearing impaired may call 973-926-8008.

**For Press follow-up, please call 1-800-222-1222**

located at University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey