PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE

Real medicine, real risks when it isn't yours.

Know the Basics

What it is

Taking a prescription drug that wasn't prescribed to you, or taking your own differently than directed. The main types are painkillers (opioids), stimulants (ADHD medicine) and sedatives (anxiety and sleep medicine).

Where it comes from

Most misused prescription drugs come from friends or family, often from a home medicine cabinet.

Real risks

Painkillers and sedatives can slow or stop breathing, especially mixed with alcohol. Stimulants can strain the heart. All three can lead to addiction.

Real or fake?

Pills from anywhere but a pharmacy may be counterfeit and contain fentanyl or meth. You can't tell by looking.

BY THE NUMBERS

99%+

of Indiana 7th–12th graders did **not** misuse prescription drugs in the past month. Just 0.9% did.

22.1% vs. 0.9%

how many peers students **thought** misused prescription drugs vs. how many actually did.

9th grade

was the only grade where misuse rose significantly, from 0.9% to 1.2%, driven by painkillers.

2026 Indiana Youth Survey

Data Check: Using These Numbers Right

- **Check the grade before you generalize.** Only 9th grade rose. Other grades held steady or fell, so "prescription misuse is rising in Indiana" isn't accurate.
- **One combined number, three drug types.** The overall rate combines painkillers, stimulants and sedatives. Say which one you mean.
- **Surveys can't tell real from fake.** Students report what they think they took. Fake pills may be counted here without anyone knowing.

Laws & Safety in Indiana

- **Sharing or selling prescription drugs is illegal,** even giving away your own.
- **Lock it up and drop it off.** Store medicines securely and use drug take-back sites or events to get rid of extras.
- **Overdose?** Call 911 and give naloxone (Narcan) if the person is hard to wake or breathing slowly.

Campaign Angles

- **Lead with the majority:** more than 99 in 100 Indiana students don't misuse prescription drugs.
- **Partner with families:** safe storage and take-back events are strong chapter projects.
- **Watch 9th grade** in your local data before building a campaign around it.

Sources: 2026 Indiana Youth Survey, Prevention Insights, IU School of Public Health-Bloomington; SAMHSA; DEA; National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).