Know More. Do More.

Understanding Substance Misuse in Teens

Participating in sports is good for a student athlete's health and self-esteem, yet it also comes with the risk of painful injury that sometimes requires surgery and treatment with opioid pain medicines.

When this is the case, they need others on their team to help them get well and keep them that way — including their parents, doctor, athletic trainer and coaches.

Dublin ACT Coalition

Nationwide Children's

This information was made possible by the Dublin ACT Coalition in partnership with Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Join us in protecting our student athletes from dangerous opioid pain meds.

When student athletes are prescribed opioid pain medicine for an injury or after surgery — sports-related or not — they need others on their team to help them get well and keep them that way.

For this reason, Nationwide Children's Hospital, in partnership with the Dublin ACT Coalition, has developed a toolkit for parents, athletic trainers and coaches which is designed to:

- Underscore the safe use of opioids and other prescription medicines
- Educate about the risk factors that increase teen risk for addiction and how to know signs of misuse
- Provide a clear and consistent no-use message regarding alcohol and other drugs and the misuse of prescription medicines
- Empower everyone in your sphere of influence to say something when they see something to save a life

On and off the field or court, athletes need to be 100% to be successful, achieve their dreams and thrive not just athletically but also academically, psychologically and socially. **We all need to be involved to make this happen.**

WHEN A CHILD OR TEEN HAS BEEN PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS:

MONITOR
Only allow your child to take medicines as prescribed. No one else should take this medicine.

SECURE
Keep your child's medicine in a locked cabinet or lock box AND out of the reach of children.

TRANSITION
Get your child off an opioid medicine as soon as you can.

DISPOSE
Medicine should be disposed of responsibly when it is no longer needed.

KNOW THE SIGNS OF POSSIBLE ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG ABUSE

Personal appearance changes, such as:

- Messy, careless appearance and poor hygiene
- Red, flushed cheeks or face not brought on by athletic activity
- Heavy sweating not brought on by athletic activity
- Fatigue not brought on by athletic activity
- Itchy skin
- Rapid weight loss not brought on by athletic activity

Behavioral changes, such as:

- Decreased motivation
- Hostility or anger
- Unusually clumsy, lack of coordination
- Slurred speech
- Loud or obnoxious behavior
- Being deceitful or secretive

Changes in routine, such as:

- New friends and/or being secretive about them
- Lying about new interests and activities
- Loss of interest in school or things they once cared about
- Money/valuables missing from home
- Demand for more privacy, locked doors, eye contact avoidance
- Skipping school

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Understanding Substance Misuse in Teens

COACHES

STUDENT ATHLETES AND OPIOID SAFETY

ADDICTION can be an unintended consequence of misusing powerful medicines.

100% ON AND OFF THE FIELD

If a student athlete has been injured or had surgery, the doctor may prescribe a powerful opioid medicine like Percocet®, OxyContin®, or Vicodin®. While these medicines can be helpful, **misuse can lead to changes in a child's brain that can last forever, can create lifelong addiction pathways, and can result in death.**

YOUR ROLE AS COACH ONCE AN ATHLETE HAS BEEN CLEARED FOR PLAY

Even once an athlete has been cleared to return to play, there is still the need to be careful. Here is what you can do as coach to ensure your athlete isn't re-injured:

- ✔ Welcome the athlete back to play.
- ✔ Do not allow an athlete to return to play until he or she is fully off of opioid pain meds and is pain free.
- ✔ Keep in close communication with your athlete and athletic trainer throughout the course of play.
- ✔ Enlist other athletes to look out for their teammate as he or she returns to play.
- ✔ Keep in close communication with your athlete, athletic trainer and your athlete's parents throughout the first few days of return to play. Remind your athlete that you expect honesty about how he or she is feeling.
- ✔ Rest your athlete or set limits for the first few games, depending on the demands of a sport and if you see your athlete is more tired than usual. Reassure the athlete that slow return to play is okay and to be patient.
- ✔ Inform the athlete, parents and athletic trainer if you think the athlete may still be having pain or other symptoms or may still be taking opioid pain meds.

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Your role as a coach

SUPPORT THE GAME PLAN FOR HEALING

- **Exercise your influence**. Be clear with all of your athletes, their parents and teammates, and your staff that supporting the treatment and recovery plan for an injured athlete who has been injured is as much a team sport as the game itself. Stress the importance of each person's role and keep everyone focused on the importance of taking every action possible to prevent the misuse of prescription opioid medicines.
- **Foster a culture of set limits for student athletes.** Whether they are injured or not, student athletes must follow a strict set of rules to be 100 percent. Beyond setting expectations for following guidelines for the use of prescription opioid medicines, reinforce other school and team policies.
- **Be a role model for kids.** Young athletes take their cues from coaches. If they know your priority is for them to return to play ONLY when they are 100 percent and without the need for prescription pain medicines, they will be better able to focus on their recovery and rehabilitation.
- **Support a culture of "See something. Say something."** Empower athletes to be mature and caring teammates by setting your expectations and stressing the message that if they see someone misusing alcohol or other drugs, including prescription opioid medicines, they should tell the athletic trainer, coach or someone else they trust right away. Remind them that this is not about ratting out a friend or teammate. This is about saving lives.
- **Remember the importance of social connectedness**. Losing the social connection to the team can be as damaging as the physical injury itself. Continue to include the student in team practices, games and social events, as appropriate.
- **Work in close partnership with your Athletic Trainer.** It cannot be stressed enough how important it is for coaches and athletic trainers to be united behind a recovery plan and in regular communication with each other, the athlete and parents about the health and well-being of injured athletes.

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WHEN A TEEN HAS BEEN PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS:

MONITOR Only allow your child to take medicines as prescribed.

SECURE Keep your child's medicine in a locked cabinet or lock box AND out of the reach of children.

TRANSITION Move your child off an opioid medicine as soon as you can.

DISPOSE Medicine should be disposed of responsibly when it is no longer needed.

Ohio rules for prescribing

Ohio issued new rules for prescribing opioid pain relievers for treatment of severe pain. Typically, no more than 5 days for children under age 18 and only with written consent by a parent or guardian.

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