



PUSHBACK

AGAINST DRUG ABUSE

PRESCRIPTION FOR ADDICTION

**A Summary of the Marathon County
Community Assessment
2011-2015**

Is Prescription Drug Abuse a Problem in Marathon County?



Quick Fact

230% Increase in arrests for possession of illegally obtained prescription medicines in Marathon County since 2011.

What Do Our Residents Think?

Forty-four people die each day in the United States from an overdose of prescription painkillers, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. is drug overdose — according to the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

The abuse of certain medications — such as opioid pain killers, central nervous system (CNS) depressants, and stimulants — can lead to a variety of adverse health effects, including addiction or use of illicit drugs (such as heroin or methamphetamine).

The information contained in this report highlights data from the Community Assessment on Prevalence and Perceptions of Medication Abuse Report conducted in

2011, 2013, and 2015 by the Marathon County Alcohol & Other Drug (AOD) Partnership and the Marathon County Health Department in collaboration with UW-River Falls Survey Research Center (2013, 2015) and St. Norbert's Strategic Research Institute (2011). The primary purpose of this report was to gather information from Marathon County residents who reside in the Wausau Metro area on the prevalence of prescription medicine abuse, perception of risk, availability and local disposal of prescription drugs.

Respondents were from Wausau, Rib Mountain, Rothschild, Schofield and Weston (Zip codes: 54401, 54403, 54474, 54476). For a copy of the full report, visit www.aodpartnership.org or www.pushbackdrugs.org

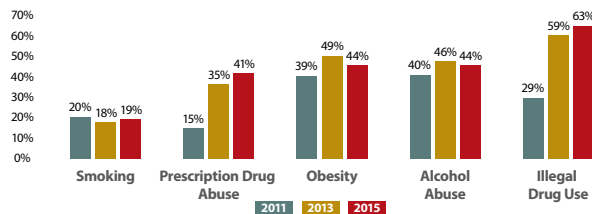
What are we going to do with this data?

This report will be the catalyst for community conversations and increased training opportunities, as well as open up policy discussions around what individuals, systems and the community can do to address medication abuse through a variety of prevention, treatment and enforcement strategies.

How concerned are residents?

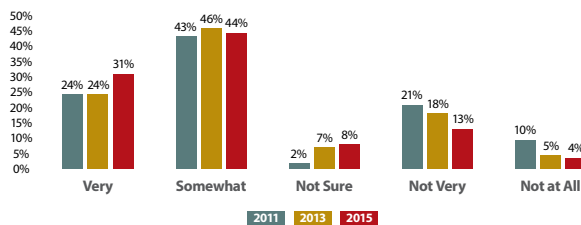
Most of us have taken a medication for one reason or another in our lives. Although most people take medications as prescribed, an estimated 52 million people (20 percent of those aged 12 and older) have used prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons at least once in their lifetimes according to the National Institutes of Health. In Marathon County, approximately 2 out of 3 people are currently taking a medication, with over half taking it for a chronic condition.

Chart 4: Percent Saying Health-Related Issue is Very Serious in Wausau Metro



Compared with other health conditions, concerns about prescription drug abuse and illegal drug use continue to rise.

Chart 15: How Concerned Are You About Prescription Medicine Abuse in Wausau Metro



Residents' concerns about prescription medicine abuse have increased since 2011. Seventy-five percent are "Very or Somewhat Concerned" in 2015 compared with 67% in 2011.



Overall Health:

- Percent of residents who feel "life is worse" in Marathon County since the 2013 survey 37%
- Percent of residents who reported being in "good" or "excellent" health 81%
- Percent of respondents who are taking a medication at time of the survey 65%*

* This is higher than the national average of 50%, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

"We did not know the problem we had with prescription medications until the reformation of Oxycontin in 2010. Within a week, heroin flooded our streets, and it hasn't left."

— Gary Schneck

Retired Marathon County law enforcement officer

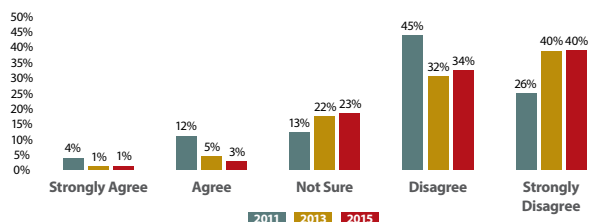


How risky is medication abuse?

TRENDING DOWN . . . the perception that abusing prescription medications is “safer” than taking street drugs.

TRENDING UP . . . the perception that it is “not ok” to take more medications than prescribed.

Chart 16: It's Safer to Get High on Prescription Medicine than Street Drugs

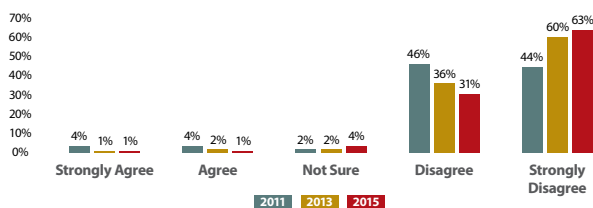


Over time, significantly fewer respondents feel that prescription drugs are a safer way to get high than street drugs. In part, public opinion seems to have shifted into the “not sure” option, but compared to 2011, there also has been a substantial increase in the percent of residents who strongly disagree that prescription drugs offer a safer means of getting high.

Quick Fact

80% feel there is “great risk” to misusing a prescription drug.

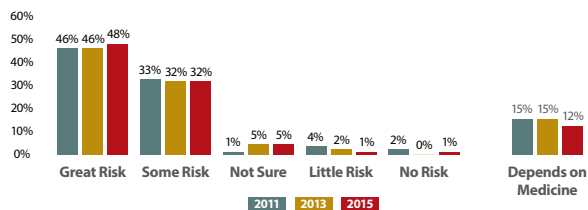
Chart 17: It's OK to Take More Than Recommended Dosage of Prescription Medicine



There have been significant changes in attitudes about taking more than the recommended dose of a prescription medicine. Virtually all respondents in all three years disagree with this proposition to some extent.



Chart 18: Rate Risk of Not Using Prescription Medicine as Prescribed



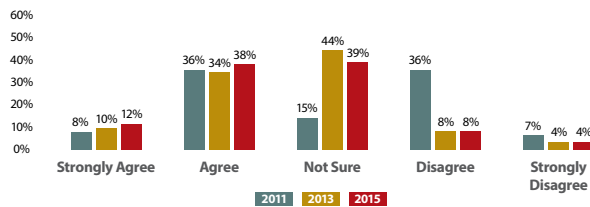
The perception of risk associated with not using medicines as prescribed has been similar in each of the three years this survey has been conducted. In 2015, 80% of residents said the risk of not using prescriptions as prescribed posed a great risk (48%) or at least some risk (32%). More than one in ten said that the risk depends on the specific medication.

Quick Fact

40% see prescription drug abuse as a very serious issue.

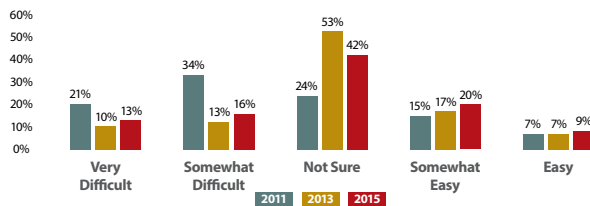
Where do residents get unprescribed medications?

Chart 11: Prescription Medicines Are Readily Available in Wausau Metro



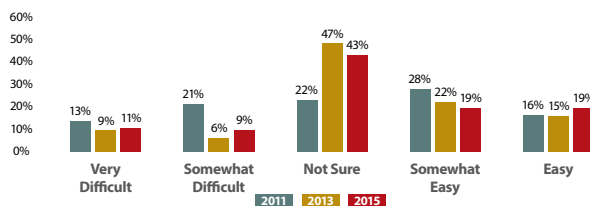
More Marathon County residents now believe prescription medicines are readily available compared with 2011 responses. About 50% of Marathon County residents surveyed in 2015 “Agree or Strongly Agree” that prescription medications are readily available for those that want to abuse them, compared with 44% of those surveyed in 2011.

Chart 12: How Easy to Get Prescription Medicine from Medical Providers to Get High



In 2011, 55% of respondents thought it was “Very Difficult” or “Somewhat Difficult” to obtain prescription drugs for recreational purposes from medical providers compared to only 29% in 2015. In 2011, 22% thought obtaining prescriptions from medical providers for recreational purposes would be “Somewhat Easy” or “Easy” compared to 29% in 2015. The differences between 2015 and earlier years are statistically significant. Many residents, today, are just not sure how easy or difficult it might be.

Chart 13: How Easy to Get Prescription Medication from Friends/Family to Get High

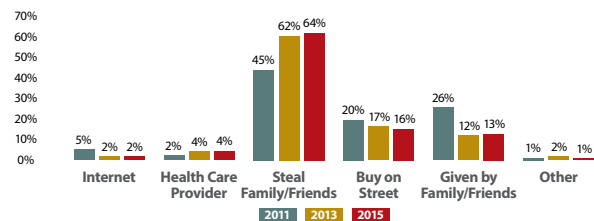


The evolution over time with respect to obtaining prescription drugs from family and friends is more



complicated. The results from 2013 and 2015 are significantly different than those obtained in 2011. Clearly, in 2011 there were higher proportions of respondents who felt sufficiently certain it was either difficult or easy to get prescription drugs from friends or family. More recently, residents seem uncertain about how easy it might be to get prescription drugs from family or friends. There are roughly twice as many in the “not sure” answer option in 2013 and 2015 than in 2011.

Chart 14: Where People Often Get Prescription Medicine Not Prescribed to Them



Only two-thirds of the respondents in 2015 had an opinion about where unauthorized prescription medicines could be obtained. Of those, 64% said unauthorized prescription drugs most often were obtained by “taking them from family, friends, or stealing from another source.” This is up significantly from 45% in 2011. Sixteen percent of respondents in 2015 believed that these drugs were most often bought on the street (down slightly from 2013 and 2011). Thirteen percent believed unauthorized prescription medicines were given to users by a family member or friend (down significantly from 26% in 2011). Very few respondents felt unauthorized prescription drugs were obtained directly from health care providers or the Internet.

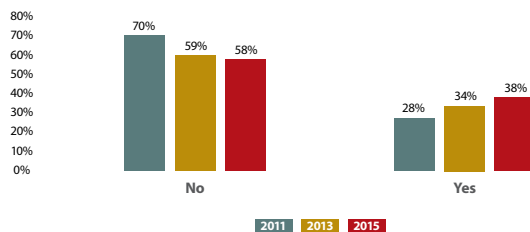


What is being done to address medication abuse in our communities?

Quick Fact
38% have expired prescriptions in their homes.

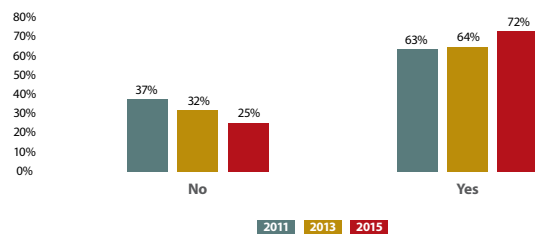
Given that respondents in the Wausau metro area believe the primary source of prescription drugs for use to get high is stealing them from family and friends, it is important to know what proportion of Wausau households have expired medicines in their homes.

Chart 19: Currently Have Expired Prescription Medicine in Home



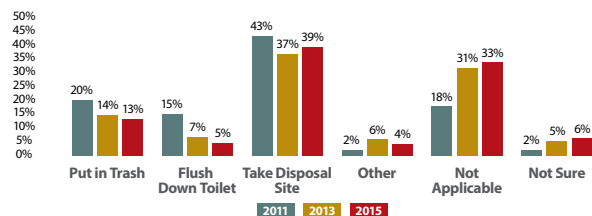
In 2015, 38% or nearly 4 of every 10 respondents said they currently have expired medicines in their homes. Since 2011, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of homes with expired medicines. Although we don't know what sorts of medicines these are, this is a worrying trend when you consider that those who abuse prescription medicines say they most often steal them from family and friends.

Chart 20: Know Where to Dispose of Expired Prescription Medicine in Wausau Metro Area



Today, more residents seem to know where they can dispose of expired medications than in 2011. Nearly 3 out of 4 residents are aware of permanent drop box locations. This awareness increased significantly between 2013 and 2015.

Chart 21: How Currently Dispose of Unused/Unwanted Prescription Medicine



In 2015, nearly 4 out of 10 residents said they take their unused or unwanted prescription medicines to a disposal site — consistent with responses in 2013 and 2011. A third of the 2015 respondents said this question was not applicable to them, presumably because they have no unused or unwanted prescriptions in their home. Fewer people are putting their unwanted medicines in the trash or toilet compared to 2011.

How to properly dispose of prescription drugs and medical supplies

What goes into the drop box

- Any unwanted or expired prescription drugs* and over-the-counter medications, including medicines for your pet.
- Empty pills from original containers. Place them in a zip-style bag. Blister packages with pills enclosed are accepted.
- Keep liquids and creams in original containers, then place into a zip-style bag.

**With special emphasis on commonly abused medications, such as prescription painkillers, muscle relaxants, and mood-altering medications (e.g., depressants, anxiety, ADHD, sleep-aids).*



Quick Fact

75% disagree with "It's safer to get high on prescription drugs than street drugs."

What can you do to reduce medication abuse?

1. Secure your medication in a safe place, up and away or out of sight and reach.
2. Monitor the amount of medications you have in your home to identify if someone is diverting them.
3. Dispose of any unwanted or expired medications at one of Marathon County's six medication drop box locations noted on the back page of this report.
4. It's never too early to talk to your loved ones about the dangers of medication abuse.
5. Due to the possibility of addiction, take medications as prescribed.

What doesn't go into the drop box

For more information about how to dispose of the following items, call the Marathon County Solid Waste Department: 1-877-270-3989

- Needles, syringes, or IV bags
- Chemotherapy medications
- Inhalers
- Vitamins or supplements
- Personal care products



Quick Fact

72% know where they can dispose of expired prescriptions.

For more information about medication abuse

Visit the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Dose of Reality page at www.doseofrealitywi.org. For more information about what you can do to get involved in Marathon County, visit www.aodpartnership.org or www.pushbackdrugs.com.



Drop-Box Locations & Times

Wausau Police Department

515 Grand Avenue, Wausau
Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. in Lobby

Everest Metro Police Department

5303 Mesker Street, Weston
Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. in Lobby

Kronenwetter Police Department

1582 Kronenwetter Dr., Kronenwetter
Open 24 hours Outside Access

Rothschild Police Department

211 Grand Avenue, Rothschild
Open 24 hours in Lobby

Colby-Abbotsford Police Department

112 W Spruce Street, Abbotsford
Mon/Wed /Fri (8 a.m. – 5 p.m.)
Tues. /Thurs. (8 a.m. – 1 p.m.) in Lobby

Village of Marathon Police Department

311 Walnut Street, Marathon
Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. – 4 p.m. in Lobby



Health Foundation



*This report was made possible through a funding partnership between
Ministry Saint Clare's Hospital and the Aspirus Health Foundation.*

Special thanks to Kinziegreen Marketing Group for creating this Summary.