

Overdose Awareness Day is Aug. 31

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August 31 marks Overdose Awareness Day, an international event held each year since 2001 to remember those lost to drug overdoses. Globally between 102,000 and 247,000 people died from drug overdoses in 2011. Every day 100 people die from drug overdoses in the United States. "Drug overdoses are becoming more and more prevalent not only for illicit drugs, but prescription drugs too," said Brooke McCuiston, Wichita Mountains Prevention Network (WMPN) Regional Prevention Coordinator. In 2012, the number of deaths in the United States from prescription drug abuse surpassed the number of fatalities from motor vehicle accidents. These overdose deaths are becoming a widespread epidemic not only occurring nationally but throughout Oklahoma as well.

In 2011, there were 417 opioid-involved deaths across the State of Oklahoma. Although painkillers and other prescribed pharmacy drugs can help a medical condition, careless or unintended use can have tragic long-term consequences.

This epidemic is happening to our people, our communities, our fiends, and our families. We need your help to stop these sad trends from continuing. So what can you do as a community member?

1. Properly store your medications out of reach of children and visitors, so that they don't fall into the wrong hands and this also reduces your risk for theft. The majority of people who are non-medically using prescription pain medications report getting them from friends and family members.
2. Do your part to prevent unintentional poisonings and abuse by cleaning out your medicine cabinet and properly disposing your prescription drugs. Do not flush your medications, unless specifically instructed to do so, as this can be bad for the environment. Take your unused medications to prescription drug take back containers for safe and legal disposal. Locally these containers are located at the Frederick Policy Department, Tillman County Sheriff's Department, and Tipton Policy Department.

International Overdose Day is a time to reflect and at the same time be aware that overdoses are happening internationally, nationally, and locally. These overdoses can and should be prevented, one community at a time. Because these effects can impact community members, preventing prescription drug misuse and abuse is everybody's business! Locally the Wichita Mountains prevention Network is partnering with the Tillman County Youth and community Coalition to work on this issue. To find out about prescription drug issues in your community, more information on what your community is already doing to address the problem, and what actions are still needed please contact Brooke McCuiston, at (580) 355-5246 ext. 104. Also check out the Tillman County Youth & Community Coalition's Facebook page.