

Substance Abuse Prevention Facts and Tips for Parents

- Some adolescents and young adults have an **increased risk** to drug and alcohol problems, including: drug or alcohol use at an early age; family history of drug or alcohol problems; existing mental health problems; having friends who use drugs and alcohol.
- The **adolescent brain** is not fully developed until ages **22-25**, and can be more vulnerable to the effects of drugs and alcohol; the part of the brain to develop last is the prefrontal cortex, responsible for **decision making** and moderating social behavior.
- The **earlier** a young person starts using drugs or alcohol, the **more likely** they are to develop addiction as they get older.
- Many youth may show **behaviors** in their teen years that are consistent with drug abuse, but can also be considered normal behaviors while growing up. It is important to take notice if there are several signs happening at the same time, if they occur suddenly, and if the behaviors are extreme.
- **Potential Warning Signs:**
 - Mood changes (temper flare-ups, irritability, defensiveness)
 - Academic problems (poor attendance, low grades, disciplinary action)
 - Changing friends and a reluctance to have parents/family get to know the new friends
 - A "nothing matters" attitude (lack of involvement in former interests, general low energy)
 - Finding substances (drug or alcohol) in youth's room or personal effects
 - Physical or mental changes (memory lapses, poor concentration, lack of coordination, slurred speech, etc.)
- Parents are one of the **most important influences** when it comes to preventing youth substance use. You can make a difference in their future choices.
- **Talk** with your kids early and often. Make sure they know the risks of using any substance while they are young (alcohol, illegal drugs, medicine not prescribed to them).
- Have a clear **family policy** about substance use; work together to develop reasonable consequences for breaking the rules.
- Be **involved** in your children's lives. Go to their after-school activities, have dinner together, meet their teachers and friends, know where they are and who they are with, and connect with other parents as much as possible.
- Get **help** if you suspect your child may be using alcohol or drugs, or struggling with mental health issues such as depression or anxiety.
- Be a **good role model**. Try to manage stress using strategies that are not related to drugs or alcohol, such as exercise, play a game, do yoga, or watch a funny movie.
- Most important, **Don't Give Up**, even if you think or know that your child has already used drugs or alcohol. Get some help and keep trying. Your kids are worth it.

Get more tips and information from the Partnership for Drug Free Kids at <http://www.drugfree/the-parent-toolkit/age/13-15-year-old-what-to-say/> and the Opioid Task Force at www.opioidtaskforce.org

Substance Abuse Prevention Facts and Tips for Teens

- The term **opioid or opiate** refers to a drug or chemical that attaches to sites in the brain called opioid receptors. Opioids are used to relieve pain. They are also VERY addictive. Examples of prescription opioids include: Oxycontin, Percocet, Vidodin, Demerol, Morphine, and Methadone. Heroin is also an opioid.
- The chances of becoming **addicted** to any drug are different for each person. For marijuana, around 1 in 11 people who use it will become addicted. For kids who begin drinking alcohol at or before age 15, 4 in 10 will eventually become alcoholics. Four out of 5 people who are addicted to heroin started with prescription drug misuse.
- Never take a **prescription drug** (opiate for pain or stimulant for ADHD) from a friend or relative. If you suffer from an injury which causes pain, go see your own doctor. Abuse of these drugs can cause serious health problems, including panic attacks, seizures, heart attacks, and death.
- Never **share** your prescription pain or ADHD medication with a friend or relative. You may think you are helping but taking a medicine not prescribed can be very dangerous.
- Different drugs do different things, but they **ALL affect the brain**- that's why drugs make you feel high, low, speeded up, or slowed down, or see things that aren't there.
- Repeated drug use can reset the **brain's pleasure meter**, so that without the drug you feel helpless and sad. Eventually, every day fun stuff doesn't make you happy anymore.
- Kids who drink or take drugs are more likely to be **victims** of violent crime, to be involved in car crashes, and to have serious school-related problems.
- If you smoke a lot of marijuana or other drugs, you could lose **IQ points** that you never get back.
- Most people who smoke **cigarettes** started before the age of 18. E-cigarettes are just as harmful as they also contain nicotine and other harmful chemicals.
- When you can't think straight because you are drunk or high, you may forget to **play it safe**. Having unprotected sexual intercourse can lead to chronic diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C.
- **Mixing** pills with other drugs or alcohol REALLY increases your risk of death from accidental overdose.
- If you think you have a problem with drugs or alcohol, please seek help. Talk to your parent, school nurse, counselor, doctor, or other trusted adult. Addiction is real but help is available: 1-800-662-HELP (confidential hotline) or www.helpline-online.com

Get more tips and information from the National Institute on Drug Abuse at www.drugabuse.gov, www.teens.drugabuse.gov, or <http://teen-safe.org>