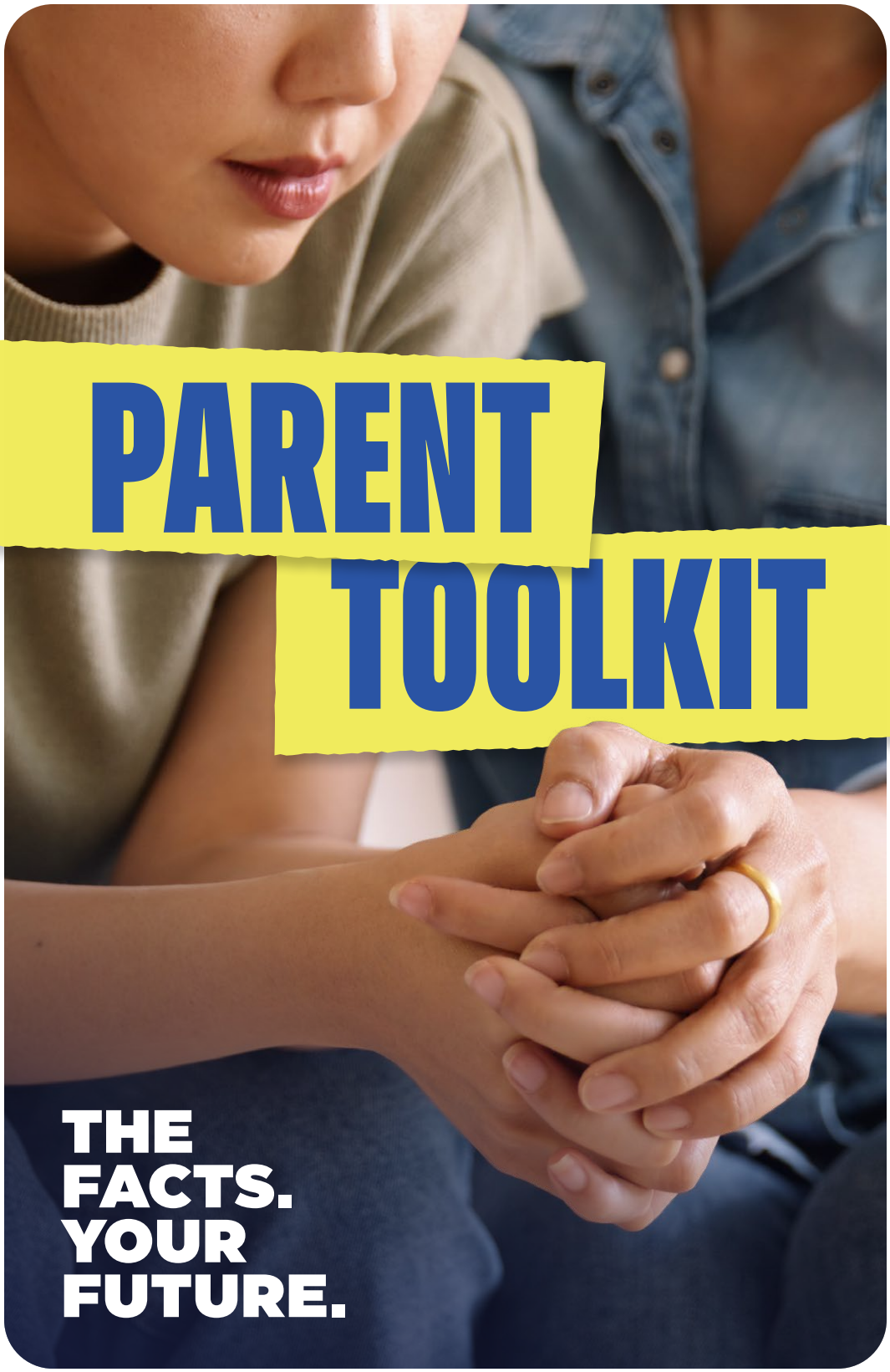
PARENT
TOOLKIT
THE
FACTS.
YOUR
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CONTENTS

1.

The Dangers of Substance Use Among Adolescents

More teens are dying from drug and alcohol use.

Drug-related deaths among adolescents doubled from 2019 to 2021,[1] tragically affecting families from all walks of life.[2]

But research shows that parents and caregivers play a key role in guarding their children from the dangers of substance use.[3] Use this guide to get the facts and learn how to talk to your teen about the risks.

FENTANYL

The Silent Killer

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, teen overdose deaths doubled from 2019 to 2021,[4] despite a historic decline in overall adolescent drug and alcohol use.[5] A major reason for this sharp increase is fentanyl, a potentially lethal synthetic opioid that is **50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine**.[6]

And some teens don't even know they're taking it.[7]

Drug dealers add fentanyl to pills that resemble common prescription medications such as Xanax, Adderall, Oxycontin, and Vicodin.[8] Teens can purchase these fake pills online or receive them from a trusted friend, believing them to be safe. Yet just one pill could kill them.

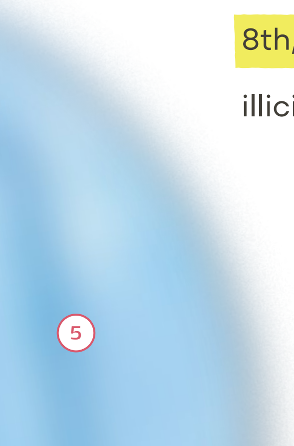
In fact, according to Drug Enforcement Administration lab testing, 7 in 10 fentanyl-laced pills contain a potentially lethal dose of the drug.[9]

When fentanyl is added to other drugs, it makes them more powerful, more addictive, and more dangerous. Fentanyl can be added to drugs like cocaine, heroine, methamphetamine, and MDMA.[10] Some state law enforcement agencies have even reported concerns of it being added to marijuana.

With accidental overdoses increasing at an alarming rate, parents and caregivers must talk with teens about the risks of fentanyl and empower them to make smart decisions when it comes to substance use.

Most parents assume their teen is not at risk. **Most parents are wrong.**

Studies show that parents and caregivers tend to underestimate drug and alcohol use among their own children, while overestimating use among other kids.[11] About 30% of parents believe their teen has had a drink of alcohol,[12] but the latest studies reveal that by the end of high school, more than 54% of teens report having consumed more than just a few sips of an alcoholic beverage.[13] Similarly, less than 2% of parents believe their teen has used an illicit substance,[14] but the reality is that 27% of 8th, 10th and 12th graders report having used an illicit drug.[15]



Clearly, the problem is more pronounced than many parents and caregivers presume.

The truth is EVERY teen is vulnerable – including your own.

That's partly because the adolescent brain is hard-wired for risk-taking. It's drawn to highly stimulating and rewarding experiences with little consideration for potential consequences. Just one ordinary interaction with a friend who offers your teen a substance they perceive as harmless could lead to dire consequences.

THE RISKS ARE REAL

The adolescent brain is more susceptible to addiction and can suffer irreversible changes because of drug and alcohol use. Teen substance use also increases the risk of accidents, homicides, suicides, and serious physical and mental health conditions.[16]

Early intervention is key.

Research reveals that people who begin using drugs and alcohol during middle and high school have a significantly higher risk for developing a substance use disorder later in life.[17] This could result in mental health struggles, failed careers, broken relationships, jail time, and even death. Parents and caregivers can help minimize these risks by learning the facts and talking with their kids about substance use early and often.[18]

Reasons Teens Might Try Drugs and Alcohol

Various factors play a role in determining whether your teen will try drugs or alcohol, including their personality,[19] their peers,[20] and family connections and expectations.[21]

Key risk factors for teen substance use:[22]

- Pressure from friends or peers.
- Stressful life events at home, school, or in relationships.
- Mental or behavioral health conditions like anxiety, depression, ADHD, or PTSD.
- Family history of addiction or substance-using parents, siblings, or friends.
- Kids living in single-parent homes.
- Lack of parental involvement or strong support systems.
- Parents or caregivers who regularly withhold warmth and affection from their teen.
- Parents or caregivers who fail to set and stick to clear expectations concerning their teen's behavior.

Other reasons your teen might experiment with drugs and alcohol:[23]

- Curiosity about drugs or alcohol and a sense of adventure or exploration.
- Low self-esteem and a desire to fit in or feel more confident or popular.
- Boredom.
- Rebellion against authority figures or how they think they should behave.
- Trauma, such as abuse or neglect.
- Feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- To help them stay focused, study, or relieve real or perceived academic pressure.

Consequences of Teen Drug and Alcohol Use

Drugs and alcohol can seriously compromise your teen's safety and well-being and negatively impact their future. Some of the risks and consequences of teen substance use include:[24]

- Injury or death from accidents, violence, overdose, or poisoning.
- Impaired brain development and function.
- Substance use disorders or addiction.
- Increased risk of mental health disorders or complications with pre-existing mental health disorders.
- Increased stress, anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts.
- High-risk sexual activity, unsafe sex, and unplanned pregnancy.
- Reduced academic performance and motivation and increased likelihood of dropping out of school.
- Legal problems or criminal involvement.
- Fractured family relationships.

2.

The Proven Role of Parents and Caregivers in Prevention

YOU are your teen's best defense.

You are the most powerful influence in your teen's life. While you can't control every decision they make, you can significantly impact their views and behavior related to substance use. In fact, kids whose parents or caregivers talk with them about the dangers of drugs and alcohol are **significantly less likely to use them**.[1]

It's never too early to start the discussion.

Research shows that most kids are exposed to information about illicit substances at an early age through social media, the internet, television, or friends. As a result, it's important to talk to your teen about what they know. You should also invite them to come to you with questions and assure them that you will always give them the facts.

3.

How to Talk to Your Teen About Drugs and Alcohol

Talking to your teen could save their life.

If you don't talk about the risks of drugs and alcohol in your home, your teen might assume there's no harm in trying them. But that mindset could be deadly. Here are some ways to start the conversation and keep it going.

BEFORE YOU TALK

Know your stuff

Read about the negative impacts of drugs and alcohol on teens, starting with the dangers of fentanyl. The guide at the end of this toolkit can help. If your teen asks a question that you don't know the answer to, simply say, "I don't know, but let's find out."

Consider your approach.

Rather than announcing a sit-down meeting, it's best to take a more spontaneous and casual approach to the conversation. This could happen at the dinner table, in the car, on a walk, while cleaning up the kitchen, or while doing yard work together. The setting might limit how much you can cover and how deep you can go, and that's okay, as shorter talks can create an easy opening for future discussions.

Read the room.

If your teen is in a sour mood or is stressed because of finals or a fallout with a friend, save the chat for another time. Similarly, if they immediately resist your attempt to talk, give them some space, and try again later.

Be ready to talk about your own drug and alcohol use.

Think about what you will say if your teen asks about your own substance use. Consider age-appropriate ways to share your personal stories with them. If you stayed away from drugs and alcohol, explain why and whether that was difficult for you, or how you were able to say no. If you experienced the impacts of drugs or alcohol, tell them what you learned and why you don't want them to make the same choice. Your honesty can be a powerful tool in preventing risky decisions.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

1

Introduce the topic.

"I read an article about a drug called fentanyl. Have you heard about it?"

"I saw some posters in your school about teen drug use. Why do you think people are concerned about that?"

2

Ask open-ended questions.

"Do you know what binge drinking is? What do you know about it?"

"How would you feel if you learned that a friend was sharing her prescription pills with someone else?"

3

Summarize their answers and reflect their feelings to show you're listening.

"You're saying that you'd rather not use drugs, but it's hard to hold your ground because of the pressure you're under at school. Is that right?"

4

Demonstrate compassion.

"I hear you saying that you don't feel like you fit in. That's a tough spot to be in."

"I'm sorry you've been feeling anxious lately. I'd love to hear more about that if you're willing to share."

5

Ask permission before offering advice.

"May I offer you some advice on that?"

"May I share my personal experience with that?"

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

Explain the dangers of illicit drug use.

"Alcohol and other drugs can cause irreversible damage to your still-developing brain, or worse, kill you. They can also change your appearance, reduce your chances of getting into college, and destroy your relationships."

"Drug dealers are lacing fake prescription pills with potentially lethal doses of an opioid called fentanyl. It's also been found in other drugs like cocaine, meth, and ecstasy. And law enforcement has become concerned it could be added to marijuana. Kids are dying because they don't know they're taking it."

State where you stand with care and concern.

"I know you may be tempted to drink or use other drugs, but they can hurt or even kill you, so I want you to avoid them – no matter what your friends do. Agreed?"

"Never take a pill given to you by anyone other than a doctor or a pharmacist, no matter how safe you believe it is. I love you and would hate for anything bad to happen to you. Do you understand what I expect of you?"

"I expect you to wait until you are 21 to drink. I know it will be difficult, but it's what's best for you."

Encourage them to intervene when friends are in trouble.

"I want you to call 911 if a friend has passed out or become unconscious following substance use. It will take courage, but it's the right thing to do and could save their life."

"If you're ever with a friend who has been drinking, insist they give you their car keys. And if you're ever in a situation where you and your friends don't have a safe ride home, call me, and I will come get you."

GOING DEEPER

Learn together.

Sit down together and watch one of the short videos at TheFactsYourFuture.org. You can find additional videos on the websites listed in the resources section of this toolkit.

"I'd like for you to watch a short video with me and then tell me what you think."

Role play.

Talk through possible scenarios together and let them think of ways they might respond.

"In what sort of situations might you be offered drugs or alcohol? What might they say? How would you respond?"

"If you were with kids who were vaping, drinking, or using drugs, how would you feel? What would you do?"

"What would you do if you learned that a friend was sharing her prescription pills with someone else?"

"What's something helpful you could say to a friend who's considering trying drugs or alcohol?"

Give them a way out.

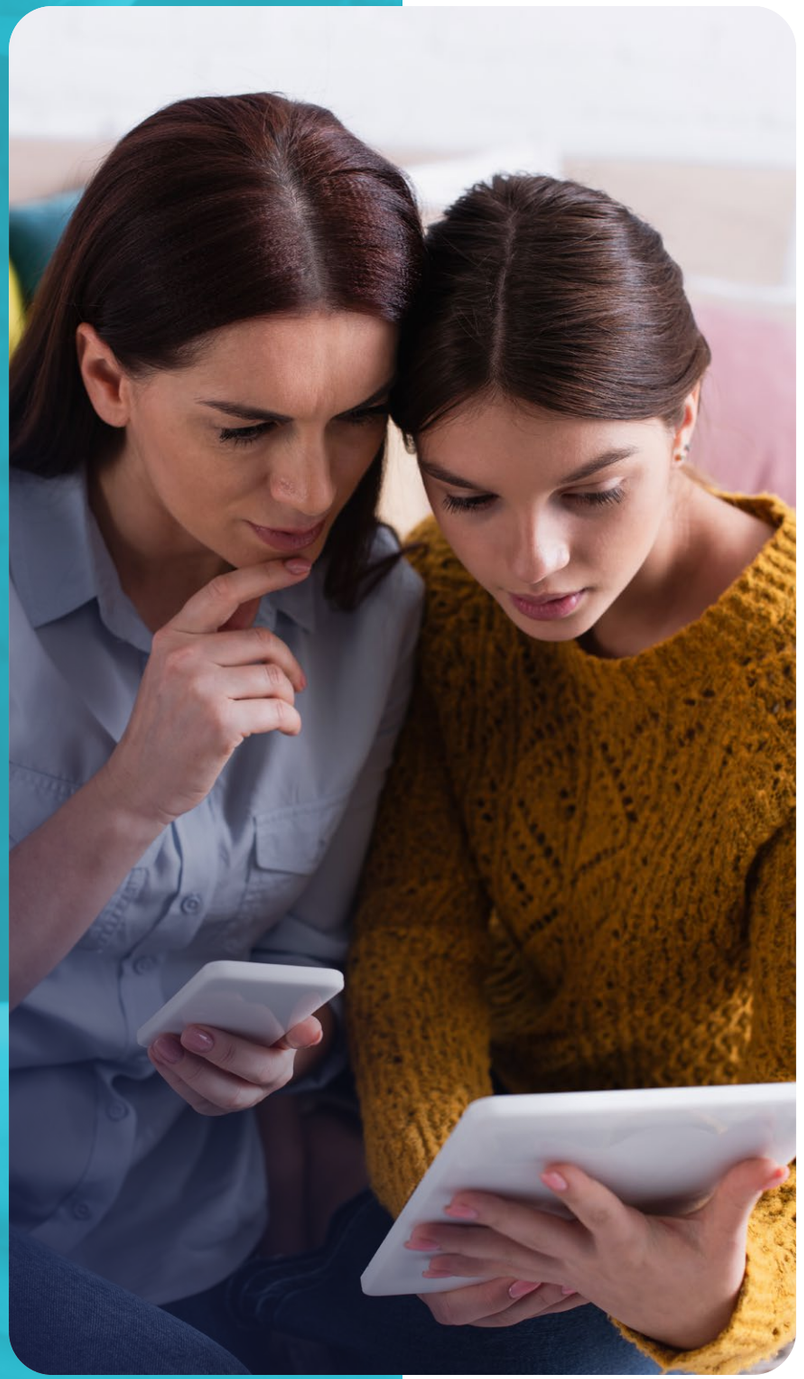
Come up with a code word or phrase that they can use if they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation. Tell them they can text or call you at any time and use the word or phrase, and you will come get them, no questions asked.

DOS AND DON'TS FOR TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN

Dos	Don'ts
DO demonstrate care, compassion, and concern for their well-being.	**DON'T** react in anger, be overly harsh, or say "because I said so."
DO listen patiently to their thoughts and opinions.	**DON'T** argue or cut them off.
DO try to understand where they are coming from.	**DON'T** condemn their thoughts or opinions.
DO stick to the facts, use age-appropriate language, and focus on how substance use can negatively affect the things that are important to them like their grades, athletic performance, memory, career aspirations, or their physical appearance.	**DON'T** make exaggerated claims.
DO stay calm and try to find something positive to say, even when you don't like what you hear. For example, "I really appreciate your honesty."	**DON'T** expect all conversations to go smoothly. They won't. And that's okay.

COMMON TEEN RESPONSES AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

If they say...	You can say...
It's not a big deal. Everyone does it.	"It might seem that way, but more and more kids are learning the facts and staying away from these substances because of the risks. In the last year, only about 2 in 10 10th-graders used an illicit drug, and just 3 in 10 drank alcohol."
I'm just so overwhelmed with life, school, etc.	"It's normal to feel overwhelmed, and I'm sorry you're struggling. I'm always here to listen, and we can also find a counselor to help you talk through your feelings if you're open to that."
I know, I know. You've talked to me about this already.	"You're right. We've talked about this before, and I want us to continue the conversation because it's important and I love you. Can we do that?"
You're overreacting.	"I'm talking with you because I care about you. Alcohol and other drugs can put your life and your future at risk, and I don't want that for you."
If alcohol is so bad, why do you drink?	"My brain is different than yours. Science tells us that until you turn 25, your brain is still developing and is at greater risk for suffering irreversible damage due to substance use. Science also tells us that people who begin drinking or using drugs in middle and high school are more likely to become addicted, which can cause all sorts of problems later in life."



How to Keep the Conversation Going as Your Teen Matures

Talking to your teen about substance use is not a one-time conversation. The world of illicit substances is constantly changing, and kids need current information to make informed decisions. They also need frequent reminders that you're on their side, that your expectations haven't changed, and that you will always be there for them.[1] That's why discussions about drugs a nd alcohol should begin early, happen regularly, and evolve continuously into young adulthood.[2]

You can reduce any anxiety or awkwardness by making talking with your teen a regular part of your day – perhaps over dinner, while you're in the car, or shortly before you go to bed. You can also use news stories, TV shows, movies, and real-life situations as teachable moments to keep the conversation going.

Other Resources for Talking with Your Teen

Visit Parents Lead (https://www.parentslead.org/age-specific-resources/10-12/what-do-i-say) for age-specific examples to help you better communicate with your teen.

Visit NaturalHigh.org for help talking with your teen about the dangers of fentanyl.

4.

More Ways to Help Your Teen Thrive

Talking with your teen may not be enough.

If you are not actively involved in your teen's life and do not set and enforce clear rules and expectations, your conversations with them will be less effective. In addition to talking with your teen, the following parenting strategies can help reduce the likelihood that they will engage in substance use.

PROVEN PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

1 Develop a strong, open, and nurturing relationship with your teen.[1]

Get to know your teen. Demonstrate interest in the things they enjoy. Have fun together. Praise their achievements. Ask their opinions. Put down your phone and make eye contact when speaking with them to signal that you're listening. Offer support when they're going through a rough time. Extend forgiveness when they mess up. Seek their forgiveness when you mess up. Above all, invite them to come to you at any time, for any reason, with the assurance that while there may be consequences for their actions, they will never lose your love or support.

2 Establish clear rules and consistently enforce consequences.[2]

Regularly tell your teen what you expect of them in all areas, including how they should treat others, how they should and shouldn't speak to you, and how they should handle responsibilities and privileges. Explain your reasons for these rules and enforce appropriate consequences when your teen breaks them. Teens are more likely to make wise choices when parents and caregivers routinely set high expectations and aren't afraid to hold them accountable for their actions.

3 Regularly monitor your teen's activities and get to know their friends.[3]

Pay attention to your teen's behavior, peer relationships, whereabouts, and online activity. Be aware of the apps your child has on their phone and where they are meeting people online, on Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or other sites. Keeping tabs on your teen is not a violation of their privacy. Rather, it's part of your duty as a parent or caregiver who is ultimately responsible for their safety and well-being. Remind your teen that your greatest desire is for their good, which is why it's important for you to know what they're up to.

4 Encourage them to pursue their passions.[4]

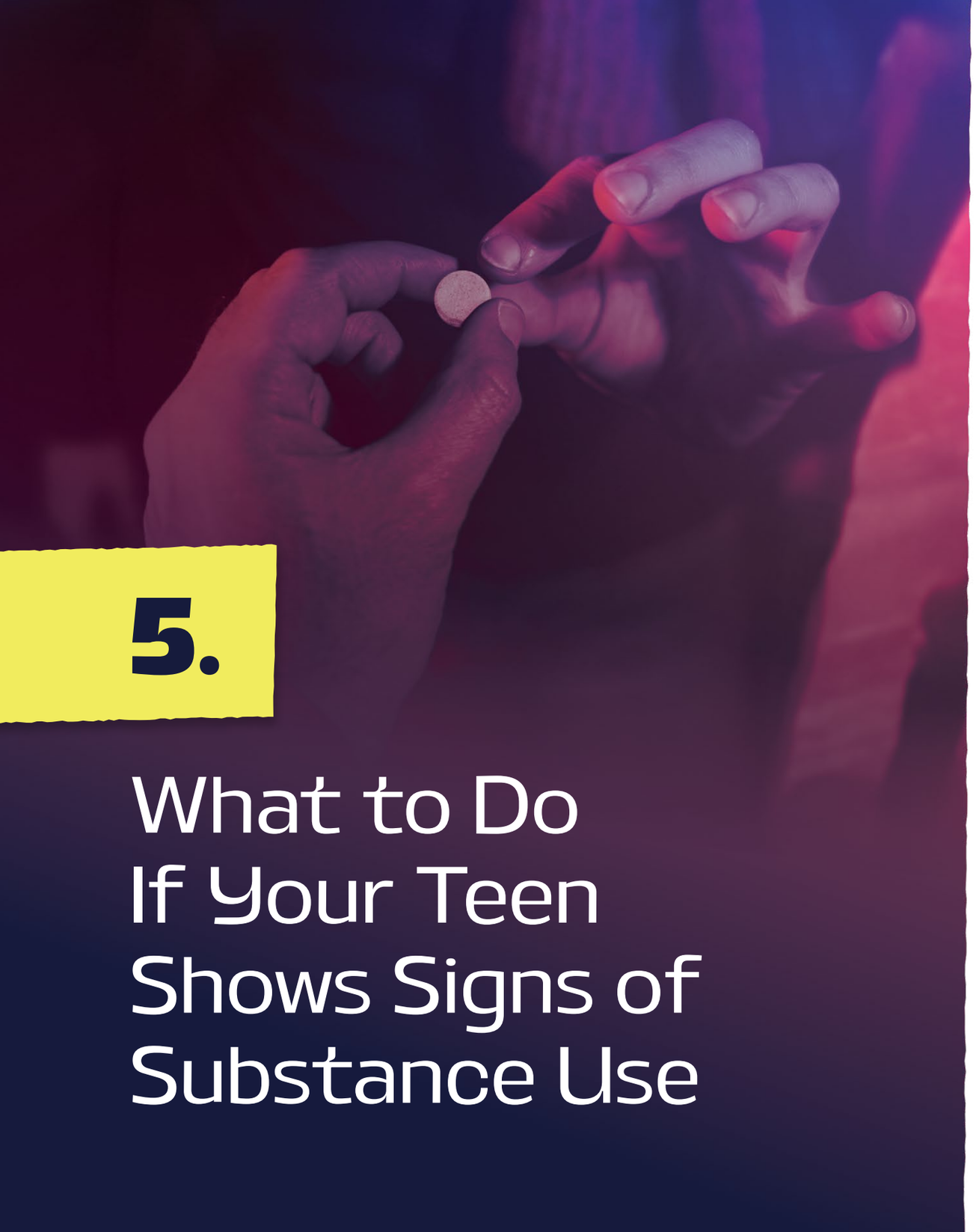
Talk to your teen about their interests and point out their gifts and talents. Encourage them to pursue their hobbies and get involved in sports, clubs, or other extracurricular activities. Involvement in extracurricular activities fosters confidence in kids, positively shapes their self-image, and adds value to their lives, which means they have more to lose when it comes to risky behaviors. Extracurricular activities also help teens develop life skills, such as discipline, goal-setting, and accountability, which better prepares them to face adversity in the future.

5 Spend time with them.[5]

Establish daily routines and activities that involve spending quality time with your child. These could include family meals, evening walks, and other physical activities, as well as playing games or pursuing hobbies and interests together. Use these times to talk about what is going on in your teen's life. Encourage them to come to you when they face tough choices or want to talk about difficult topics.

6 Set a good example.[6]

Kids tend to unconsciously mimic the behavior of parents and caregivers. So, if you want your teen to treat others with kindness and respect, they need to see you treating others with kindness and respect. If you want your teen to work hard in school, they need to see you working hard at home or in your job. If you want your teen to make wise decisions about drugs and alcohol, they need to see you practicing healthy habits, like drinking in moderation and using prescription drugs only as directed.



5.

What to Do If Your Teen Shows Signs of Substance Use

When preventative measures don't work.

Sometimes, no matter how hard you try to prevent it, your teen will choose to experiment with drugs or alcohol. Knowing the signs, how to proceed, and where to get help can reduce the risk of addiction and other negative effects on your child's life.

Recognizing when something is wrong.

Changes in mood, behavior, and appearance can all point to substance use.[1] While these signs do not always mean your teen is using, you should be concerned enough to find out, especially if these changes occur suddenly or are combined with other signs.

SIGNS OF OVERDOSE

If your teen shows signs of drug overdose or alcohol poisoning, call 911 immediately and stay with them until help arrives. While overdose symptoms can vary depending on the substance used, the following signs could indicate an emergency situation:

- Unconsciousness or difficulty waking from sleep.
- Bluish lips or fingernails.
- Pale or flushed skin.
- Extreme confusion or paranoia.
- Abnormally low or high body temperature.
- Abnormally fast or slow breathing.
- Abnormally fast or slow heart rate.
- Vomiting.

While you wait for help to arrive, don't hit or slap your teen to startle them awake, and don't put them into a cold bath or shower. While well-intentioned, these actions can make matters worse. If your teen is breathing, help them onto their side to prevent choking. If they are not breathing, check to see if anything is blocking their airway, and then administer rescue breathing. If you aren't familiar with rescue breathing or other first-aid principles, consider taking a class offered by your local Red Cross agency.

Changes in Mood

- Lack of interest in favorite activities.
- Increased irritability.
- Sadness or depression.
- Anxiety.

Changes in Behavior

- Increased secrecy or isolation.
- Abrupt changes in friends.
- Abnormal sleeping habits.
- Changes in appetite.
- Irresponsibility or poor judgment.
- Breaking rules.
- Withdrawing from family.

Changes in Appearance

- Bloodshot or red eyes.
- Unexplained weight loss or gain.
- Poor hygiene.
- Unexplained injuries.
- Unusual smells on their breath, clothes, or belongings.

Other Signs to Watch For

- Deteriorating family relationships.
- Less concern for how they look.
- Sudden drop in academic performance.
- Trouble at school.
- Trouble with the law.
- Presence of pill containers or drug paraphernalia in their room.

I found drugs in my teen's room.

NOW WHAT?

If you find drugs, alcohol, or drug paraphernalia in your teen's room, car, or clothes pockets, you may feel shocked, angry, confused, concerned, or betrayed. First, don't jump to conclusions. While the evidence may seem to point to the obvious, give your teen the benefit of the doubt until they've had a chance to explain.

Furthermore, while it's natural to want to get to the bottom of things, resist the urge to confront your teen immediately. This could lead to an emotionally volatile interaction and end up pushing your teen away. Instead, take a deep breath and **follow these four steps**.

How to Proceed If You Suspect Your Teen Is Using.

1

Talk to someone you trust.

Talk with someone you trust who knows your teen, such as your spouse, teacher, coach, or faith leader to see if they've noticed similar changes. You might also want to share your suspicions with your family doctor or a drug and alcohol counselor to get unbiased answers to any questions you might have.

2

Prepare for the conversation.

Decide when, where, and how you want to approach your teen. Ideally, you should find a time and place that is quiet and free from distractions. Think about how you can show your love and concern for your teen in your posture, tone, and words. Practice what you want to say. Consider how they might react and how you will respond. Aim to remain calm and compassionate, yet firm in your tone. Think about what consequences are most appropriate before you engage.

3 Be ready for anything.

Your teen may immediately admit to using illicit substances and either apologize or insist it's no big deal. On the other hand, they might deny it and call you crazy, accuse you of snooping, or even storm out of the room. Try your best to keep your cool, no matter what happens. If the conversation spins out of control, tell your child you love them and that you'd like to pause for now and resume your talk later.

4 Talk to your teen.

Wait until your teen is sober to start the discussion.

"I've noticed changes in you recently, and I'm concerned. Can we talk?"

"I know you've been under a lot of stress lately, and I want to help because I love you. Can you tell me what's going on?"

Make observations, share your suspicions, and ask questions, but don't make accusations.

"I'm curious—have you been drinking with your friends on occasion?"

"I found an empty pill container in your room. Can you tell me about that?"

Remind them of your love for them and ask them to be honest with you.

"I've always been open with you because I love you. Please tell me the truth."

Reiterate the dangers of substance use, even if it only happens occasionally.

"More than half of fentanyl-laced pills contain a lethal dose of the drug. Just one pill could kill you, and you would never suspect it."

"Even occasional alcohol use at your age could cause irreversible damage to your brain, and just one accident or run-in with the police could really mess up all you want to accomplish in life."

"Drugs can change the way you look, affect your athletic ability, and lead to addiction."

Make sure they know that professional help is an option, regardless of whether substance use is an issue.

"I want to make sure you get the help and support you need. Would it be helpful to talk with a counselor or a doctor about what you're going through?"

If your teen denies they have used illicit substances but your suspicions remain strong, consider asking a school guidance counselor, doctor, or drug treatment referral center for help.

What to Do If You Learn Your Teen Has Used Drugs or Alcohol.

Remain calm.

Your teen may shut down if you react in anger.

Enforce appropriate consequences.

If you've talked with your child before about what you expect of them when it comes to substance use, your disciplinary actions shouldn't surprise them. Choose an appropriate consequence that sends a firm message. Depending on the offense and the age of your teen, you could require them to do extra housework instead of going out the following weekend, take away their phone, limit when they can use the car, or delete their social media accounts, among other options.

Express warmth and compassion.

Remind your teen that you love and care for them, and that you want what's best for them. Tell them that you will always support and stand by them, no matter what.

Don't be ashamed.

Substance use occurs in all kinds of families. By knowing the facts, talking with your teen, and holding them accountable, you are doing everything you can to ensure they make healthy choices. If you're struggling with shame or fear, or feeling overwhelmed, consider joining a local parent support group where you can work through your feelings and get advice from parents and caregivers going through similar situations.

Don't despair.

For some teens, substance use fades as they mature without resulting in serious consequences. Others may learn from the difficulties or losses caused by their behavior and ultimately turn their life around. Even if you find out that your teen has developed a substance use disorder, do not lose hope. Help is available, and treatment can work.

WHERE TO GET HELP

If your teen demonstrates signs of continued substance use, seek professional help. A doctor can screen for signs of drug use and related health conditions and suggest possible next steps. Other more immediate resources include:

988 Florida Lifeline

Call, text, or chat 988 to be connected to trained counselors who will listen, provide support, and connect you to additional resources if necessary.
988FloridaLifeline.org

CORE Network

A long-term substance use disorder recovery program designed to establish a coordinated system of care for those seeking treatment for substance use disorder.
FLCoreNetwork.com

iSave Florida

Drug overdose is a nationwide epidemic and an increasing number of Floridians are losing their lives to overdose - you can help save a life with naloxone.
iSaveFL.com

Local Services

If you or someone you know is in need of substance abuse and/or mental health services, our local managing entities can help you locate available programs.
myflfamilies.com/SAMH-get-help

6.

Resources for Assistance

Visit the following websites for more information on teens and substance use

Partnership to End Addiction

drugfree.org/get-support
Offers information and support for navigating teen substance use. You can also connect with trained specialists and join online parent and caregiver support groups.

Drug Enforcement Administration: Get Smart About Drugs

getsmartaboutdrugs.gov
A resource for parents, caregivers, and their families. Offers information about specific drugs, along with helpful videos and fact sheets.

National Institute on Drug Abuse: Tools for Parents, Caregivers, and Educators

teens.drugabuse.gov
Find the latest science-based information about teen drug use, health, and the developing brain, including videos, publications, research studies, and current news articles.

Natural High Drug Prevention Program for Youth

naturalhigh.org/for-parents
Free videos and resources for you and your teen to explore together, with a heavy focus on fentanyl. Encourages teens to discover their "natural high" rather than use alcohol or drugs.

Disposal of Unused Medicines, What You Should Know

fda.gov/drugs/safe-disposal-medicines/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know
Learn how to dispose of unused or expired drugs.

7.

Guide to Common Illicit Drugs and Their Risks

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Most of the information in this guide came from the U.S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) website, https://www.dea.gov/factsheets. Additional sources are noted throughout, where appropriate.

GET THE FACTS!

FENTANYL

Type: Opioid

Fentanyl is an incredibly strong, man-made painkiller approved by the FDA for pain relief and anesthesia. It is about 100 times stronger than morphine and 50 times stronger than heroin. The presence of fentanyl in many fake prescription pills has contributed to rapidly increasing rates of teen overdose deaths.

Appearance

Illegal fentanyl looks like powder. This tasteless, odorless substance can be added to fake tablets or mixed with other drugs like heroin or cocaine, often without the user knowing it's there. According to DEA lab testing, seven out of 10 fentanyl-laced pills contain a potentially lethal dose of the drug.

Legal fentanyl products come in different forms, like "lollipop" lozenges, dissolvable tablets, under-the-tongue tablets, mouth sprays, nasal sprays, skin patches, and injections.

How it's used

Fentanyl can be injected, sniffed, smoked, swallowed as a pill, or placed on blotter paper.

Mind and body effects

Fentanyl, similar to other common opioid painkillers, produces effects such as relaxation, euphoria, pain relief, sedation, confusion, drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, urinary retention, small pupils, and respiratory depression.

An overdose of fentanyl can cause someone to become very sleepy, have small pupils, cold and clammy skin, bluish skin, slip into a coma, or have trouble breathing, which can lead to death. If a person shows signs of a coma, pinpoint pupils, and slowed breathing, they might have been poisoned by an opioid.

Common names

Apache, China Girl, China Town, Crazy One, Dance Fever, Dragon's Breath, Fire, Friend, Goodfella, Great Bear, He-Man, Heineken, Jackpot, King Ivory, Murder 8, Nal, Nil, Tango & Cash, and TNT.

ALCOHOL

Type: Depressant

Alcohol is a liquid substance found in drinks like beer, wine, and liquor. It can affect the way people think, feel, and act.

Appearance

There is no single color or visual indicator for alcoholic drinks, but they can often be identified by their specific, sharp odors. This smell can be masked by other flavors and beverages, making it more difficult to identify. Alcoholic drinks can also be hidden inside of other containers, like plastic soda bottles.

How it's used

While teens don't drink alcohol as often as adults, when they do consume alcohol, they tend to binge drink, or drink a lot within a short amount of time.[1] More than 90 percent of all drinks consumed by teens are consumed through binge drinking. Binge drinking is considered four or more drinks for a female, or five or more drinks for a male, within two hours.[2] Underage drinking can fulfill a teen's natural desire for independence, although they often don't fully recognize its effects on their health and actions. The types of alcohol with the highest rates of use by underage drinkers include beer, malt beverages (alcoholic lemonade or other sweet drinks), vodka, whiskey, and rum.

Mind and body effects

Alcohol negatively affects brain development. This can result in a variety of consequences, such as memory problems, increased irritability, health issues, poor academic performance, an increased risk of injury, and an increased risk of engaging in risky behaviors such as violent or delinquent behaviors and unsafe sex. It can also damage the liver, stomach, and heart, cause weight gain, and impair the body's ability to heal from injuries or illness.[3]

Common names

While not many teens use street names for alcohol, some slang terms may include booze, juice, and liquid courage.

NITROUS OXIDE

Type: Inhalant, Sedative

Nitrous Oxide is traditionally used by dentists and doctors as an anesthetic for patients during procedures, but can be dangerously misused as an inhalant or sedative due to its dissociative effects.

Appearance

Nitrous Oxide, also called laughing gas, is a colorless gas with a slightly sweet smell. It can be found in everyday items, like whipped cream cans, cooking sprays, and computer cleaners.[4]

How it's used

"The gas is inhaled, usually by releasing nitrous gas cartridges (bulbs or whippets) into another object, such as a balloon, or directly into the mouth. Effects are felt almost immediately and last for a few minutes."[5]

"It is a common component of some commercial products, most notably as a propellant in steel aerosol containers used in whipped cream dispensers, from which it can be inhaled."[6]

Mind and body effects

"Nitrous Oxide, also called laughing gas, is a colorless gas that dentists and doctors use to relax patients during procedures. It has a slightly sweet smell and can be found in everyday items, like whipped cream cans, cooking sprays, and computer cleaners."[7]

The general short-term effects of whippets include feeling joyful and excited, lowered ability to sense pain, sound, or touch, and mild dissociation. The side effects of whippets include a tingling sensation, weakness in the legs, irregular heartbeat, slurred speech, blurry vision, nausea and vomiting, and experiencing delusions.

Using Nitrous Oxide just once can kill you. Nitrous Oxide can stop your heart from beating, a phenomenon called Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome.

Common names

Laughing Gas, Whippets, Nos, Nangs, Hippy Crack, Sweet Air

COCAINE

Type: Stimulant

Cocaine is a powerful stimulant that comes from the coca plant. It is highly addictive. Crack cocaine is a processed form of cocaine that is smoked rather than snorted or injected. Both cocaine and crack cocaine produce intense, short-lived euphoria and can cause severe health problems, especially for the heart.

Appearance

Cocaine typically comes in the form of a white, crystalline powder. It may be sold in small plastic bags or folded paper packets. Crack cocaine, on the other hand, appears as small, off-white or yellowish rocks or chunks. It has a texture similar to hard candy or wax.

How it's used

Cocaine is typically crushed into a powder, divided into lines, and snorted through the nose. It can also be dissolved in water and injected, or rubbed onto the gums. Crack cocaine is smoked using a glass pipe.

Mind and body effects

Cocaine and crack cocaine use can cause higher heart rate and blood pressure, as well as strong feelings of euphoria and alertness. Users may also become energetic, talkative, or paranoid. Long-term use can lead to severe health issues, such as heart attack, stroke, and mental disorders. Addiction may cause significant financial, legal, and relationship problems.

Signs of a cocaine overdose can include paranoia, delirium, and exhaustion.

Common names

Coke, Blow, Snow, or Powder (cocaine). Rock, Base, Fat Bags, White Ball, and Nuggets (crack cocaine).

HEROIN

Type: Opioid

Heroin is an illegal and highly addictive opioid drug derived from morphine, a substance found in the seed pods of certain poppy plants. Heroin provides a quick and intense feeling of pleasure and relaxation, but it also carries significant risks, including overdose and addiction.[8]

Appearance

Heroin typically appears as a white or brown powder, or as a black, sticky substance known as “black tar heroin.” Most street heroin is “cut” or “stepped on” with other drugs, including fentanyl, or with common substances such as sugar and starch.

How it's used

Users can consume heroin by injecting, snorting, or smoking it. High purity heroin is usually snorted or smoked. Each method has its own risks and effects on the body.

Mind and body effects

Heroin’s short-term effects can include a rush of euphoria, warm flushing of the skin, dry mouth, and heavy limbs. Long-term effects include severe health issues like collapsed veins, infections, lung complications, and addiction. Overdose can cause slow and shallow breathing, coma, or death from respiratory failure.[9]

With regular heroin use, tolerance to the drug develops. As tolerance grows, a user must take more heroin to achieve the same intensity of effects. Over time, physical dependence and addiction to the drug develop.[10]

Common names

Smack, H, Junk, Brown, Black Tar, Chiva, Hell Dust, Horse, Negra, and Thunder.

MARIJUANA

Type: Depressant, hallucinogenic, and stimulant properties

Marijuana is a drug that changes how people think and feel. It's made from the Cannabis sativa plant, and contains many different chemical compounds, but THC is the main one that affects the mind.[11]

Appearance

Marijuana is a mix of dried green or brown flowers, stems, seeds, and leaves. It usually looks green, brown, or gray and can look like tobacco. Some varieties are purple, orange, or reddish in color. Marijuana can also come in liquid form as a concentrated THC extract known as liquid THC, among other street names.

How it's used

Marijuana is usually smoked as a cigarette (called a joint) or inhaled using a pipe or bong. Sometimes, it is smoked in a blunt, which is a cigar that has been emptied of tobacco and refilled with marijuana, occasionally in combination with another drug. Marijuana can also be brewed as tea or mixed with foods, like brownies, cookies, or lollipops. These are often called edibles. Liquid THC is consumed orally by placing drops under the tongue or by spraying it onto food, but it can also be vaporized and inhaled using an electronic vape pen.

Mind and body effects

When smoked, THC from marijuana goes into the bloodstream and then to the brain. Short-term effects include problems with memory, learning, problem-solving, and coordination. Frequent long-term use can cause physical dependence and psychological addiction. Smokers experience serious health problems such as bronchitis, emphysema, and bronchial asthma.

Since the teenage brain is still developing, regular use can harm the brain's ability to function, leading to lower IQ scores and difficulty retaining new information.[12] Marijuana use has also been linked to increased risk of mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and psychosis. Heavy use, especially among people with a genetic predisposition, may contribute to the development of schizophrenia.[13]

Common names

Aunt Mary, BC Bud, Blunts, Boom, Chronic, Dope, Gangster, Ganja, Grass, Hash, Herb, Hydro, Indo, Joint, Kif, Mary Jane, Mota, Pot, Reefer, Sinsemilla, Skunk, Smoke, Weed, Yerba. Liquid THC might be referred to as Green Dragon, Mayzack, or Tink, among other names.

METHAMPHETAMINE

Type: Stimulant

This drug increases energy, alertness, and reduces appetite, making users feel more awake and focused. However, it can also lead to dangerous health issues and addiction.

Appearance

Methamphetamine, also known as "meth," typically appears as a white, odorless, bitter-tasting crystalline powder. Crystal meth resembles glass fragments or shiny blue-white "rocks" of various sizes. It can also be found in pill form.

How it's used

Meth can be swallowed, snorted, injected, or smoked. Each method of use can have different effects and risks.

Mind and body effects

Meth is a highly addictive drug with potent central nervous system (CNS) stimulant properties. Short-term effects of methamphetamine include increased heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature, along with rapid breathing, sweating, and teeth grinding. Users who smoke or inject it report a brief, intense rush. Oral ingestion or snorting produces a high that can continue for as long as half a day.

Long-term use can cause serious mental health issues, such as anxiety, paranoia, hallucinations, and violent behavior, as well as health problems like heart and lung damage. High doses may result in death from stroke, heart attack, or organ failure caused by overheating.

Signs of a meth overdose can include agitation or aggressive behavior, paranoid thoughts or delusions, chest pain, heart palpitations, or breathing problems. A meth overdose can lead to immediate life-threatening health conditions like a heart attack, seizure, or stroke.

Common names

Batu, Bikers Coffee, Black Beauties, Chalk, Chicken Feed, Crank, Crystal, Glass, Go-Fast, Hiropon, Ice, Meth, Methlies Quick, Poor Man's Cocaine, Shabu, Zhards, Speed, Stove Top, Tina, Trash, Tweak, Uppers, Ventana, Vidrio, Yaba, Yellow Bam.

VAPING AND E-CIGARETTES

Type: Stimulant (Nicotine)

Vaping is the act of inhaling a vapor that comes from an electronic device called an e-cigarette or vape pen. These devices heat up a liquid, called vape juice or e-liquid, which often contains nicotine, the addictive chemical in tobacco. Vaping can also be used to consume marijuana. Vaping has become more popular over the years, especially among adolescents.

Appearance

Vape pens and e-cigarettes come in various shapes and sizes. Some look like regular cigarettes, while others are more stylish or discreet. The vape juice or e-liquid comes in small bottles or cartridges and can be found in many different flavors.

How it's used

Vaping can be abused when people, especially teens, use it frequently or consume liquids with high levels of nicotine or other harmful substances. Even though vaping is sometimes considered a safer alternative to smoking, it still has risks, especially for teens, whose brains are still developing.[14]

Mind and body effects

The effects of vaping can vary depending on the contents of the vape juice or e-liquid. With vapes that contain nicotine, users may experience a buzz, higher heart rate, and raised blood pressure. Some people may also feel a headache with dizziness, coughing, and lung discomfort. The long-term effects of vaping are not yet fully understood, but nicotine is highly addictive and can negatively impact brain development in adolescents.[15]

Although uncommon, vaping overdoses do occur. It is possible to consume too much nicotine through vaping, or through skin contact/ingestion of e-liquid. Mild symptoms of nicotine poisoning include nausea, headache, and dizziness, as well as possible vomiting and diarrhea. More severe cases may result in abdominal pain, weakness, confusion, seizures, and death. If someone shows these signs after vaping, it's important to seek medical help immediately.[16]

Common names

There aren't specific street names for vaping, but people might refer to it as "vaping," "using a vape pen," "juuling," or "hitting a Juul" (a popular brand of e-cigarettes).

Prescription Drugs

AMPHETAMINES

Type: Stimulant

Amphetamines reduce fatigue and appetite, making users feel alert and focused. They are prescribed for ADHD and narcolepsy, but are often diverted and sold illegally for non-medical use. Teens misuse prescription stimulants more often than other prescription medications, often to boost academic or social skills.

Appearance

Amphetamines come in pill or powder form. Common prescription names include Adderall, Dexedrine, and Ritalin.

How it's used

Prescription amphetamines are generally taken orally, but can also be crushed and snorted, or mixed into liquid. Diversion, or the sale of legally prescribed drugs, is a major contributor to the misuse of prescription stimulants. Nearly half of teens with real stimulant prescriptions are approached by peers to sell or give away their medication.

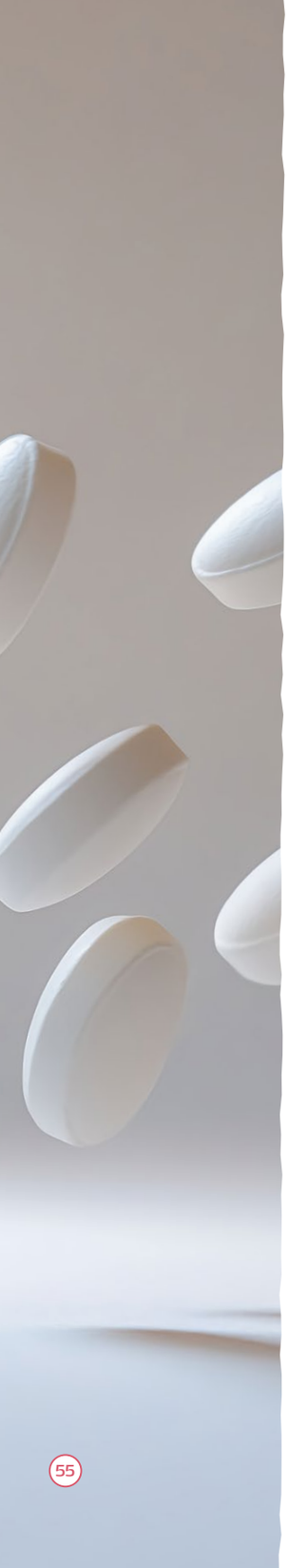
Mind and body effects

Physical effects of amphetamines include higher blood pressure and pulse, difficulty sleeping, low appetite, and exhaustion.

Chronic abuse produces psychosis and paranoia. Users may engage in repetitive skin picking, become preoccupied with inner thoughts, or hear and see things that aren't there. Overdose effects include agitation, increased body temperature, hallucinations, convulsions, and possible death.

Common names

Speed, Addies, and Amps.



BENZODIAZEPINES

Type: Depressant

Also known as "benzos," they are prescribed to treat anxiety disorders and insomnia. They work by enhancing the effect of a neurotransmitter called GABA, which helps temporarily calm the nervous system, similar to alcohol.

Appearance

Benzos come in various forms, such as tablets or capsules. They can be found in different colors and shapes and may have markings or imprints to identify the type and strength. Brand names include Valium, Xanax, Klonopin, and Ativan.

How it's used

Prescription benzodiazepines are meant to be taken orally, but some people misuse them by crushing the tablets and snorting or injecting them. This misuse can lead to addiction and other health risks.

Mind and body effects

When used as prescribed, benzos can help reduce chronic anxiety or nervousness. However, misuse can lead to drowsiness, confusion, dizziness, and impaired coordination. Long-term abuse can result in serious memory issues and blackouts, mood swings, and physical dependence.[17]

For a long-term user, abruptly stopping use of the drug can cause unique and deadly withdrawal effects, including seizures. Safe recovery from benzodiazepine addiction and withdrawal generally requires the supervision of a medical professional.[18]

Common names

Bars, Xannies, Xans, Downers, Tranks, and Benzos.

OPIOID PAINKILLERS

Type: Opioid

Prescription opioid painkillers are a class of medications that are prescribed to relieve moderate to severe pain. They include drugs like oxycodone, hydrocodone, and morphine. Unfortunately, these drugs have a high potential for abuse and addiction. In a recent survey, 14% of students reported misusing prescription opioids.

Appearance

Opioid painkillers come in various forms, including tablets, capsules, and liquid. Tablets and capsules can be different colors and shapes, depending on the specific medication and its dosage. Some opioids have markings or imprints to identify the type and strength. Liquid opioids are often used in hospital settings or for patients who have difficulty swallowing pills. Common brands include OxyContin, Percocet, and Roxicodone (oxycodone); as well as Vicodin, Norco, and Lortab (hydrocodone).

How it's used

Prescription opioids are intended to be taken orally as directed by a healthcare provider. Misuse of these drugs can occur when people take them without a prescription, take higher doses than prescribed, or by crushing and snorting the tablets or dissolving them in water and injecting the solution. These methods of misuse can increase the risk of addiction, overdose, and other serious health problems.

Mind and body effects

When used as prescribed, opioids can effectively manage pain and improve a patient's quality of life. However, they can also cause feelings of euphoria and relaxation, which can appeal to people and lead to misuse. Misuse of these drugs can result in addiction, respiratory depression, and death. Long-term use causes physical dependence. The body grows accustomed to the drug, and unpleasant withdrawal symptoms occur when use is stopped.

In addition to the physical effects, opioid misuse can have significant social and behavioral impacts on a teen's life. These may include changes in mood, such as increased irritability, anxiety, or depression. Teens who misuse opioids may begin to withdraw from family and friends, lose interest in hobbies they once enjoyed, and disengage from academics.[19]

Common names

Hillbilly Heroin, Kicker, OC, Ox, Roxy, Perc, Oxy (oxycodone), Vike, and Watson-387 (hydrocodone).

GHB

Type: Depressant

GHB, or gamma-hydroxybutyrate, is a central nervous system depressant. It's sometimes used recreationally, but is also known as the "date rape drug" because it can cause drowsiness, amnesia, and unconsciousness.

Appearance

GHB typically comes in liquid form, which may be clear or slightly colored, and has a slightly salty taste. It can also be found as a white powder or a tablet.

How it's used

GHB is usually taken orally, either by drinking the liquid or ingesting the powder or tablet. Strong sedative effects mean that even small doses can lead to overdose and poisoning.

Mind and body effects

People who ingest GHB may experience feelings of euphoria, relaxation, and sociability. It can also result in dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and loss of consciousness. Overdose is possible, and may cause coma or death.

Regular use can lead to addiction and dependence on the drug. Withdrawal symptoms may include insomnia, higher heart rate, and blood pressure and occasionally, paranoid or delusional thinking.

Common names

Easy Lay, G, Georgia Home Boy, GHB, Goop, Grievous Bodily Harm, Liquid Ecstasy, Liquid X, and Scoop.

KETAMINE

Type: Dissociative

Ketamine is a powerful anesthetic and dissociative drug originally developed for medical use. It is also abused for its hallucinogenic effects. It is commonly known as "Special K" or simply, "K."

Appearance

Ketamine usually comes as a white or off-white crystalline powder. It can also be found in pill or liquid form.

How it's used

Ketamine is often used in club and party settings, sometimes by itself, and other times mixed into other drugs like meth, MDMA, or cocaine. Ketamine powder can be snorted or smoked, typically in marijuana or cigarettes. Liquid ketamine can be injected or mixed into drinks.

Mind and body effects

Ketamine can cause hallucinations, out-of-body experiences, and a sense of detachment from reality. It can also impair motor function, cause dizziness, nausea, and, in higher doses, lead to respiratory issues, loss of consciousness, cardiac arrest, or coma.

Common names

Special K, Cat Valium, Kit Kat, K, Super Acid, Super K, Purple, Special La Coke, Jet, and Vitamin K.

MDMA

Type: Hallucinogenic and stimulant properties

MDMA is a man-made drug with both stimulant and hallucinogenic effects. It is commonly known as Ecstasy or Molly and is often used recreationally for its ability to enhance senses and create feelings of emotional closeness.

Appearance

MDMA typically comes in pill or capsule form and occasionally as a brownish powder. The pills can be various colors, shapes, and sizes, and may have logos or designs stamped onto them.

How it's used

MDMA is usually swallowed as a pill or capsule, but it can also be snorted, smoked, or dissolved in a liquid and ingested. People typically use it at parties, clubs, and other social events.

Mind and body effects

MDMA can cause feelings of euphoria, increased energy, emotional warmth, and distortions in sensory perception. However, it can also lead to dangerous side effects, such as increased heart rate, high blood pressure, dehydration, overheating, anxiety, and even death.

MDMA releases large amounts of the neurotransmitter serotonin, depleting the brain. This causes strong, negative psychological aftereffects that users may experience for several days after coming down from the drug. Some people who use MDMA regularly can experience confusion, depression, anxiety, paranoia, and impairment of memory and attention. Chronic misuse of MDMA may produce unique neurotoxic effects in the brain.

Symptoms of an MDMA overdose can include abnormal heart rate and rhythm, hyperthermia (overheating of the body), or seizures.

Common names

Ecstasy, Molly, E, X, and XTC. Pills stamped with designs and logos may have their own names.

PSILOCYBIN (MUSHROOMS)

Type: Hallucinogen

Psilocybin is a chemical that comes from certain species of psilocybe mushrooms. Misuse of psilocybin can cause unpleasant physical and psychological effects and impair the user's judgment.

Appearance

Psilocybin is most often present in the form of dried mushrooms. These can be whole, including stem and cap, but may also be shredded or ground up. The color of psilocybe mushrooms varies from light brown to golden brown or even bluish, depending on the species.

How it's used

Psilocybin mushrooms are typically eaten. Users may also brew them as a tea or add them to foods to mask their earthy flavor.

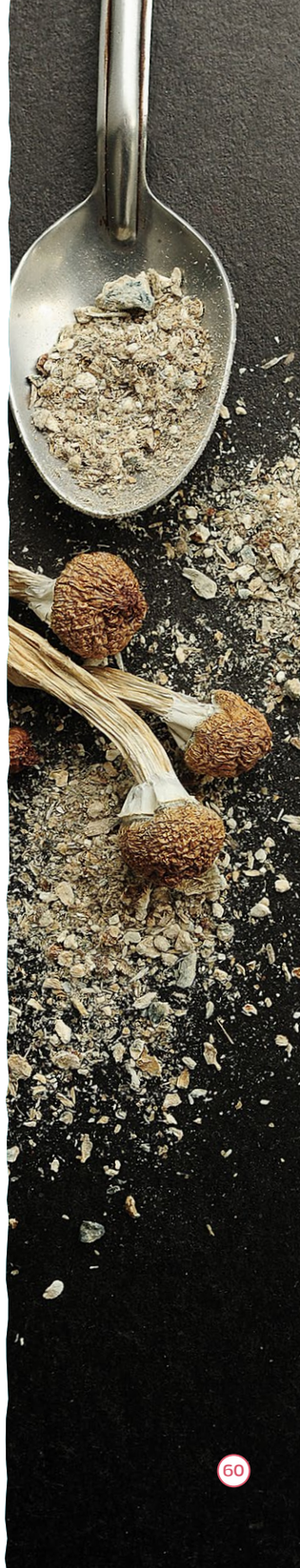
Mind and body effects

When ingested, psilocybin can cause visual and auditory hallucinations, altered perception of time and space, mood changes that range from euphoria to anxiety, enhanced emotions and senses, as well as increased introspection and spiritual experiences. Physical effects may include nausea and vomiting, dilated pupils, higher heart rate, drowsiness or sleepiness, and difficulty with fine movements and coordination. Effects can last from 2 to 8 hours.

Ingesting large quantities of psilocybin can result in a longer and more intense mushroom "trip" and greater likelihood of unpleasant physical and emotional experiences, including panic or psychotic-like episodes. In some cases, altered emotion and brain function can persist for several weeks after a single dose.

Common names

Magic Mushrooms, Shrooms, Caps, and Boomers. Individual species and strains of psilocybin-containing mushrooms also have their own names, such as Psilocybe Cubensis (Golden Halo) or Psilocybe Szurescens (Flying Saucer).



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