

THE

# DARK SIDE

OF EXPERIMENTING



## **DRUGS COME IN MANY FORMS**

It's frightening to know that the world our teens live in is becoming more dangerous every day. Not even the drugs that threaten our teens are the same as when we grew up, or even the same year to year.

New drugs are being introduced, old drugs are being abused in new ways, and they're all becoming easier to access..even sometimes perfectly legally.

## TRENDS

- For kids who try their first drink at age 13 or younger, almost 50% of them will become alcoholics as adults. (Hingston et al., 2006)
- Nearly 4 out of 10 students have consumed alcohol by the end of 8th grade.
- Children who begin drinking before age 15 are five times more likely to become an alcoholic as an adult than those who begin at 21.
- 65% of teens who drink obtain their alcohol from family and friends.
- 96% of adults and parents do NOT believe it is acceptable for parents to provide alcohol to underage youth (Century Council Survey)
- 90% of teens don't think drinking is worth the consequences (TCC, Opinion Research Corp, Caravan, Feb 2008)

## MISCONCEPTIONS

- *Hosting an alcoholic party at my home for my teen provides a safe, controlled environment.* Hosting an alcoholic party for your underage youth is illegal and sends a message that it's OK to drink at home—so it's OK to drink anywhere. These parties reinforce underage drinking. (MADD)
- *Alcohol is harmless and it is just a part of growing up—it is safer than illegal drugs.* Alcohol is a drug. It affects every organ in the body.

## GO FURTHER

Choices and Consequences by Dick Schaeffer  
[www.therecoveryplace.net](http://www.therecoveryplace.net)  
Adolescents in Crisis by G. Wade Rowatt  
[www.hazelden.org](http://www.hazelden.org)  
[www.teen-safe.org](http://www.teen-safe.org)

## More teens are killed by alcohol than all other drugs combined.

More than 3 million US teens are already “problem drinkers.” We firmly believe that any drinking by a teen is a problem, so that number should be much larger. Let's put an end to this epidemic.

### Tips and Advice to Consider

The legal drinking age of 21 is not something trivial; teens are not physically equipped to consume alcohol. Their brains have simply not developed enough to handle the high from drinking, nor the temptation to avoid it.

Statistics tell us that teens are getting most of their alcohol from “friends and family.” That means we, as parents, have an important role in preventing the number one killer of teens. Providing underage drinkers with alcohol is unsafe, illegal and irresponsible. And turning a blind eye is as irresponsible as putting a drink in their hands. Make your stance about underage drinking known to your teen, their friends, and their friends' parents.

Addiction is hereditary, and more likely to occur with teens, because the rational area of their brain hasn't fully developed. Teens are also more prone to be sensation seekers, quickly forming habits. Talk to your teen about any family history of alcoholism and addiction. Explain how they are more likely to fall into the trap because of their genetic predisposition. Openly talk about how alcoholism has ruined the lives of people you know.

Talk to your teen about how to say no. (“I don't feel like it...do you have any soda?”, “Alcohol is not my thing”, “I can't because my parents are waiting up for me.”)

### Get help

Treatment centers such as the Adolescent Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) at Children's Hospital Boston provide family-oriented and developmentally appropriate approaches to treatment for your family and your teen.  
[www.ceasar-boston.org/asap](http://www.ceasar-boston.org/asap)

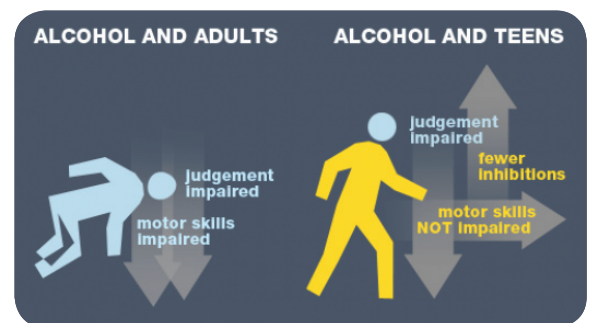
### Warning to Parents

*Friends and family have put a drunk person to bed to “sleep it off,” only to find them dead in the morning. Alcohol poisoning is a deadly situation—know the warning signs & risks. (Consuming 5 or more drinks in one sitting is called binge drinking & can cause alcohol poisoning!)*

### Warning signs of alcohol poisoning include:

Slow, shallow/irregular breathing  
Confusion  
No withdrawal from painful stimuli

Unconsciousness  
Blue-tinged skin or pale skin  
Absent reflexes





# MARIJUANA

## There's no such thing as safe marijuana.

Marijuana is the most frequently used illegal drug in this country. That statistic may not be alarming to you, but when you consider the following facts, we as parents, should be called into action.

- Over 4,800 American teens start using marijuana each day, and the age of first use often seen in drug rehab centers is 11 years old.
- For the first time in over a decade, teen marijuana use is on the upswing
- 38% of American teens use marijuana (Partnership for a Drug Free America 2010)
- Teens report that over 75% of their friends are getting high at parties
- It is proven that today's marijuana is not the marijuana of the 60's or 70's; In the 1970s pot contained 4% THC, and today it is over 8.5% THC, making it much more potent and dangerous.

### Tips and Advice to Consider

Your teen is far less likely to use pot if you talk early and often about the risks of drug abuse. Teens cite their parents as one of the largest influences in their decision not to use drugs. Don't avoid the conversation if you smoked pot as a teen. Help them learn from your mistakes and explain the differences in today's marijuana. (See additional suggestions for having this conversation on the Tobacco page. (Taken in part from theantidrug.com)) Consider purchasing a drug testing kit (available now at most drug stores) to give your teen a reason to say no. "...I can't...my parents drug test me".

If you suspect your teen is using marijuana, realize that it is a serious situation that needs immediate attention. Marijuana is a gateway drug, and is rarely used alone. It may be hard, but remind yourself that you are the parent in this situation, and that your teen will be using deceitful tactics such as lying and empathy to get around discipline and further their drug use. First steps include doing a search of their room, cutting off their supply of money (if they have a job, start putting their paychecks into a savings account for them), and calling your family physician, their teachers and parents of their friends. Your doctor will have a wealth of information about treatment centers, programs and advice. Don't be embarrassed about the problem; be proud of your decision to take action! Most importantly, remember to stand firm with your teen about the decisions you've made. These decisions are saving their life.

#### To find a drug rehab center near you:

[www.drug-rehabs.org/  
drug-statistics.php#marijuana](http://www.drug-rehabs.org/drug-statistics.php#marijuana)

The average length of time it takes for parents to discover a teen's drug habit is 2 years.



### GO FURTHER

[www.hazleden.org](http://www.hazleden.org)

[www.teendrugabuse.us](http://www.teendrugabuse.us) (Search "marijuana")

[www.parentingteens.about.com](http://www.parentingteens.about.com) (Search "marijuana")

[www.empoweringparents.com](http://www.empoweringparents.com) (Search "mairjuana")

[www.marijuana-info.org](http://www.marijuana-info.org)



### TRENDS

- Marijuana is the most frequently used illegal drug in the United States. Over 83 million Americans over the age of 12 have tried marijuana at least once.
- Approximately 60 percent of the kids who use drugs use only marijuana. Of the users, about 25% use it 20 or more days per month.
- About 1 in 6 10th graders report they are current marijuana users (used within the past month).
- Each year, 100,000 teens are treated for marijuana dependence.
- Recent studies show that teen marijuana use worsens depression.
- Marijuana potency increased last year to the highest level in more than 30 years, posing greater health risks to people who may view the drug as harmless, according to a report released by the White House.
- Reaction time for motor skills, such as driving is reduced by 41% after smoking 1 joint and is reduced 63% after smoking 2 joints.



### MISCONCEPTIONS

- *Marijuana is not addictive.*  
Long-term marijuana abuse can lead to physical addiction. Teens who use marijuana frequently will suffer withdrawal symptoms.
- *Effects of Marijuana are minimal.*  
Research has shown that marijuana's adverse impact on learning and memory can last for days or weeks after the acute effects of the drug wear off.
- *Marijuana does not lead to other drug use.*  
Long-term studies of high school students show that very few young people use other illegal drugs without first trying marijuana. Using marijuana puts teens in contact with people who are users/sellers of other drugs, so there is more of a risk that a marijuana user will be exposed to and urged to try more drugs.
- People can still function on marijuana.  
Marijuana affects memory, judgment and perception. If you're high on marijuana, you are more likely to use bad judgment.

# METHAMPHETAMINES

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Same young lady, before & after  
11 months of Meth use

## TRENDS

- Teen methamphetamine use is rising—especially among young people in the Midwestern and Eastern states—and could even be replacing marijuana as the drug of choice in some regions of the country, according to an Associated Press report released in 2005.
- Methamphetamine is made in illegal laboratories and has a high potential for abuse and addiction.
- According to a 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 12.4 million adolescents age 12 years and older have tried meth at least once in their lifetime. And methamphetamine use has become a growing trend among teen girls, who use the drug as an appetite suppressant and weight-loss aid.
- Meth causes more trips to the ER than any other drug.
- Meth use causes irreversible damage to blood vessels in the brain.

## MISCONCEPTIONS

- *The effects of Meth will wear off quickly.* Meth creates welts on the user's body giving them sores called "crank bugs." Other effects of Meth are shortness of breath, severe depression, hyperactivity and paranoid delusions. The use of methamphetamine can cause damage to the brain that is detectable months after the use of the drug.
- *Meth use is not that harmful.* The damage to the brain caused by meth use is similar to damage caused by Alzheimer's disease, stroke, & epilepsy.
- *Using Meth is like using diet pills.* Think again—it destroys you inwardly and outwardly. Check out the Faces of Meth website at [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org).

## Unlike many illegal drugs, meth causes permanent physical and psychological damage.

Typically, one-tenth of a gram of Crystal Meth in tablet-form costs \$5.00 and can provide a high for up to 12 hours. It is classified alongside cocaine and PCP, which all have a high potential for abuse. These drugs lead to severe psychological and physical dependence, and extreme damage including rotting teeth, anorexia, acne and permanent brain damage. Shockingly, 22% of teens state that they believe meth would make them happy, and that their friends would not dissuade them from trying the drug. A recent study shows that 45% of teens say the drug is readily available to them.

### Tips and Advice to Consider

Teen meth use isn't a popular trend at 3% usage, but it is a concern for several reasons. First and foremost, it is one of the most addictive illegal drugs, and as mentioned above, has an alarming high risk for dependency and abuse. In rural areas, Meth is especially accessible because of backyard "kitchens" and the ease of hiding the illegal activity. (Realize that Meth kitchens are even kept in the trunks of cars.) Because Meth is made from household chemicals, it may be hard to discern that anything is out of the ordinary. Considering the high element of danger associated with Meth, parents need to be educated about this drug, and pass along a healthy fear to their teens.

If you suspect your teen or anyone is involved in any activity related to Meth-amphetamines, call the police immediately. It is important that you do not enter any area that may be a center for cooking meth, nor touch a single instrument or piece of garbage that may have been a by-product of this activity. Meth cooking is incredibly dangerous, leaving chemical residue that you may not even be able to see. Kitchens can easily and unpredictably explode, killing people and starting fires. When police enter an area suspected to be a part of Meth activity, they must suit up in Hazardous Material protective suits, including breathing masks and head-to-toe protection. Let this be a warning sign to call professionals, and step back to let them do their jobs.

Your local health department, police and physician will have information on local treatment centers and programs. Get the user involved in programming immediately, and take part in supportive programming yourself. The programs you enroll in will state that the effectiveness of treatment generally increases when the program draws on a variety of components and a specific length of time.

## GO FURTHER

[www.drugfree.org/Portal/DrugIssue/MethResources/faces/index.html](http://www.drugfree.org/Portal/DrugIssue/MethResources/faces/index.html)  
[www.methmadness.com/methmadnessmain.html](http://www.methmadness.com/methmadnessmain.html)  
[www.theantidrug.com/drug\\_info/drug\\_info\\_meth.asp](http://www.theantidrug.com/drug_info/drug_info_meth.asp)  
[www.4therapy.com](http://www.4therapy.com) (Search "methamphetamines 7054")  
[www.adolescent-substance-abuse.com/meth-use-among-youth.html](http://www.adolescent-substance-abuse.com/meth-use-among-youth.html)  
[www.timetogethelp.drugfree.org](http://www.timetogethelp.drugfree.org)

### Warning Signs of a Problem

- Inability to sleep, sometimes for days—then sleeping for days following
- Decreased appetite and/or extreme anorexia
- Burns, nosebleeds or track marks
- Increased sensitivity to noise
- Nervous physical activity such as excessive fidgeting or picking/scratching skin

# PRESCRIPTION & OTC drug abuse

## I didn't realize my son was getting high off the medicines in our cabinet.

Pharmaceuticals taken without a prescription or a doctor's supervision can be as dangerous and deadly as taking illicit drugs. Prescription medications and over the counter drugs (OTC), as all drugs, can cause dangerous and deadly interactions with other drugs or chemicals in the body, and are an increasingly popular way for teens and adults to get high.

It may not dawn on us that once we're finished taking a prescription medication that we should throw away the unused pills. After all, we might want them for later, right? Wrong! Keeping old medications is dangerous because they expire, and because other people may steal them. Follow the steps on this page to properly dispose of your medications, and think about whether you should go through your aging parent's medicine cabinets as well.

### Tips and Advice to Consider

Our teens don't realize that getting high on Rx and OTC drugs is not safer than getting high on illegal street drugs, so share this information with your teen. OTC drugs, although sold without a prescription *are* dangerous and addictive. Unfortunately, they're also easily accessible.

The Internet, while a good source of information about the risks of drugs, is also a source of information for your teen about how to use OTC drugs for recreational purposes. Many websites describe what kind of medication to buy and how much to take to get high. Did you know that kids can also buy medications online without a prescription?

Take inventory of medicines in your home, even for those prescribed to your children. Just as you do for alcohol, make a note of the levels in each bottle. It isn't uncommon for a teen to take one pill here, another pill there, and sell or trade them with friends. Even just one pill in the hands of a person not intended to use the drug, can cause serious side effects, even death.

For answers to many of your questions including drug interactions, popular abused drugs and where to go for help, visit a great resource: [www.TeenOverTheCounterDrugAbuse.com](http://www.TeenOverTheCounterDrugAbuse.com).

### PROPERLY DISPOSE OF YOUR MEDICATIONS

To dispose of medications, remove the medicines from the containers, crush the tablets, and mix with cat litter or coffee grounds. Place the mixture in a plastic bag, seal the bag, and throw in the trash. Remove all identification such as patient name and Rx number from the empty containers.

### GO FURTHER

[www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/prescrip\\_disposal.pdf](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/prescrip_disposal.pdf)

[www.teenoverthecounterdrugabuse.com](http://www.teenoverthecounterdrugabuse.com)



### TRENDS

- Teens are often getting caught raiding their parent's/grandparent's medicine cabinets in order to get high. For the first time, national studies show that today's teens are more likely to have abused a prescription painkiller than any illicit drug.
- Rx and over-the-counter medications have appeal because they are easily accessible and are perceived as safe compared to street drugs.
- Poly-drugging (taking a combination of prescription drugs at the same time or mixing with alcohol) is a risky trend in prescription drug use and teen parties (pharm parties).
- Access to over the counter and Rx drugs has grown exponentially with the newest trend of online pharmacies and doctors—both of which are not legitimate, cannot write valid prescriptions, but can still get prescription drugs.
- It has become common for teens to sell prescription drugs taken from their home medicine cabinets to other teens at school.



### MISCONCEPTIONS

- *These types of drugs are safe because they have FDA approval.*  
Using prescription drugs prescribed for others or without doctor orders is unsafe and illegal...and can be lethal.
- *This is not a big problem.*  
Depressants, opiate pain relievers, stimulants, muscle relaxers, and anti-depressants are the most commonly abused prescription drugs, but the list continues to expand, making this a big problem.
- *My teen doesn't have access to these drugs.*  
Over the counter drugs are available at any pharmacy or drug store. Prescription drugs, and their prescriptions, are readily available on the internet to anyone, including your teen. Common prescription drugs are: codeine, Oxycontin®, Vicodin®, Demerol®, Valium®, Xanax®, Ritalin® and Dexadrine®



# TOBACCO smoking & chewing



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## TRENDS

- 9 out of 10 tobacco users start before they are 18 years old.
- A variety of cheap flavored cigars/blunt wraps have become popular.
- Smoking has been on the decline with US teens, but smokeless tobacco use threatens a comeback.
- To overcome three problems kids have when starting spit tobacco, manufacturers have lowered the nicotine, added “Pouches” to keep a pinch in one spot, and added sweet candy flavoring to overcome bad taste.
- Three new dissolvable smokeless tobacco products dissolve in the mouth and do not require spitting.
- Each day, more than 3,900 teens become regular smokers in the US.
- Youth who smoke are 15x more likely to use marijuana, 3x more likely to binge drink and 7x more likely to use drugs like cocaine and heroin.
- 430,000 deaths are attributed to tobacco use each year, making it the single most preventable cause of death.

## MISCONCEPTIONS

- *I don't need to worry about the health affects while I'm young.*  
Smoking reduces athletic performance, can contribute to eyesight loss, and can cause fertility problems as well as impact sexual health in males.
- *Chewing tobacco isn't as bad as smoking it.*  
Chewing tobacco can lead to nicotine addiction, oral cancer, gum disease and cardiovascular disease.

## GO FURTHER

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) (Search “Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking”)

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org) (Search “smoking”)

## Teen smokers are more likely to use illegal drugs.

This can be a difficult subject for us to address as parents. After all, many of us smoke, or did when we were younger, so it's difficult to communicate the old “do as I say, not as I do” message. But, remember that the hard conversations will be worth it when it comes to this issue. Tobacco is very addictive, and the younger a user starts, the more difficult it is going to be to quit. Teens won't naturally be aware of the real physical damage they're doing to themselves, even though they learn these things in school. Instead, they'll initially be addicted to the habit, which leads to a physical addiction. As we read in the trends, teen smokers don't stop with smoking. They're more likely to smoke marijuana, binge drink and use other illegal drugs, so intervention and cessation are critical if your teen is currently chewing or smoking.

### Tips and Advice to Consider

This is an age-old battle between parents and teenagers, and there are many different views on how to deal with the problem. Regardless, one thing is true: teen smoking is illegal and dangerous for their health. Here are a few suggestions about talking to your teen about smoking as prevention:

- If you're a smoker, maybe it's time to quit! Use this situation as an example of why never to start, because it's so hard to stop.
- If your teen asks, “Did you ever smoke?,” here are some suggestions to help get you started: “I smoked because some of my friends smoked. In those days, people didn't know as much as they know now about all of the bad health consequences. Everyone makes mistakes, and when I smoked I made a big one. I'm telling you about this because I love you and I want to save you from making a stupid decision.”

If you find that your teen is using tobacco, respond, do not react. A reaction is immediate but a response is well thought out and intentional. Approach your teen with how you found out about their smoking. Be honest and calm with them because they'll be more likely to respond the same. Research has found that traditional punishing isn't effective. Instead, get to the root of why they smoke, what urges them to continue smoking and then assist them with stopping.

Telling a teen that they're going to die from lung cancer or trying to scare him out of smoking probably won't affect them because they're young and they think they're indestructible. Discussing how smoking can impair their athletic performance, their appeal to others (yellow teeth, bad breath) and their allowance (you can't continue to give him an allowance) *would* appeal to them.

Remember, your teen was probably trying to defy you by starting to smoke; but now it's not easy to stop. Hang in there with them.

### Stop Smoking Advice

- Pick a stop date.
- Make a list of reasons why you want to quit.
- Keep track of where and when you want to smoke, then avoid those.
- Throw away all tobacco.
- Tell your friends and family you're stopping so they can hold you accountable.

# DRUGS IN THE NEWS

## Dangerous new trends you need to know about

### Blackout in a Can

This is a new rage in binge drinking that combines the uppers of caffeine with alcohol, creating a state of “wide-awake drunk” that makes it difficult for people to realize how intoxicated they are. According to the Washington Post, this enables them to consume far more alcohol than they otherwise would without passing out...That puts them at increased risk for alcohol poisoning, engaging in risky behavior such as driving drunk, and committing or being the victims of sexual assaults. Some of the brands out there include Four Loko, Joose and Core. While some states are banning the sale of such drinks, and the FDA is cracking down on the amount of alcohol and caffeine consumed in one can of these drinks, keep an eye out for these amongst teens. Due to their brightly colored and fun cans, they can easily be mistaken for energy drinks.

### Vodka Tampons, Anal Beer Bongs & Vodka Eyeballing

Each of these, while disturbing, are trends in the teenage world of getting high and getting drunk—and the names speak for themselves in terms of a “how-to.” Teens have heard that by getting alcohol into their system in non-obvious ways, their drunk/high will in turn be non-obvious to adults. All three forms are dangerous, causing alcohol to enter their bloodstream quicker than consumption through unprotected membranes, and causing infections and worse.

### Cough Syrup Abuse

Cough syrup preparations are fast becoming one of the most common drugs being abused among teens. The active ingredient of many cough syrups is dextromethorphan (also known as DXM), which if taken in large doses, can cause visual hallucinations and a heightened sense of awareness—in other words, a cheap high.

### Club Drugs

Across the country, teens and young adults enjoy all-night dance parties known as “raves” and increasingly encounter more than just music. Dangerous substances known collectively as club drugs—including Ecstasy, GHB, and Rohypnol—are gaining popularity. These drugs aren’t “fun drugs.”

Although users may think these substances are harmless, research has shown that club drugs can produce a range of unwanted effects, including hallucinations, paranoia, amnesia, and, in some cases, death. When used with alcohol, these drugs can be even more harmful. Studies suggest club drugs found in party settings are often adulterated or impure and thus even more dangerous. Because some club drugs are colorless, tasteless, and odorless, they are easy for people to slip into drinks. Some of these drugs have been associated with sexual assaults, and for that reason they are referred to as “date rape drugs.”

### Digital Drugs

It sounds crazy, but for a couple of dollars, songs can be downloaded which will alter people’s moods and can mimic the highs from illegal drugs. These sounds are called binaural beats; different frequencies that produce a euphoria. Although they are not physically dangerous to most, there is a cause for concern because it can signal that your teen is interested in getting high, and can trigger, seizures if pre-disposed.



## An Introduction to Club Drugs

“X,” “Adam,” and “MDMA” are slang names for Ecstasy, which is a stimulant and a hallucinogen. Young people may use Ecstasy to improve their moods or get energy to keep dancing; however, chronic abuse of Ecstasy appears to damage the brain’s ability to think and regulate emotion, memory, sleep, and pain.

“G,” “Liquid Ecstasy,” “Georgia Home Boy” or Gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB) may be made in homes by using recipes with common ingredients. At lower doses, GHB can relax the user, but, as the dose increases, the sedative effects may result in sleep and eventual coma or death.

“Roofie” or “Roche” (Rohypnol) is tasteless and odorless. It mixes easily in carbonated beverages. Rohypnol may cause individuals under the influence of the drug to forget what happened. Other effects include low blood pressure, drowsiness, dizziness, confusion, & stomach upset.

“Special K” or “K” (Ketamine) is an anesthetic. Use of a small amount of ketamine results in loss of attention span, learning ability, and memory. At higher doses, ketamine can cause delirium, amnesia, high blood pressure, depression, and severe breathing problems.

“Speed,” “Ice,” “Chalk,” “Meth” (Methamphetamine) is often made in home laboratories. Methamphetamine use can cause serious health concerns, including memory loss, aggression, violence, psychotic behavior, and heart problems.

“Acid” or Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD) may cause unpredictable behavior depending on the amount taken, where the drug is used, and on the user’s personality. A user might feel the following effects: numbness, weakness, nausea, increased heart rate, sweating, lack of appetite, “flashbacks,” and sleeplessness.



### GO FURTHER

For more information, visit [www.clubdrugs.org](http://www.clubdrugs.org). Information is from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and is in the public domain.