



OCTOBER IS ALCOHOL AND DRUG PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

The Negative Consequences of Underage Drinking

By: National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/alcohol>

The minimum legal drinking age in the United States is 21. Underage drinking is a serious problem, and alcohol is the most commonly used substance of abuse among young people in America. Drinking when you're underage puts your health and safety at risk.

Teens drink for a variety of reasons. Some teens want to experience new things. Others feel pressured into drinking by peers. And some are looking for a way to cope with stress or other problems. Unfortunately, drinking will only make any problems a person has already worse, not better.

There are increased risks and a range of negative consequences related to underage drinking, which include:

- Causes many deaths.**
On average, alcohol plays a role in the deaths of 4,358 young people under age 21 every year. These deaths include:
1,580 deaths from car crashes
1,269 from murders
245 from alcohol poisoning, falls, burns, and drowning
- Causes many injuries.**
In 2011 alone, about 188,000 people under age 21 visited an emergency room for injuries related to drinking alcohol.
- Increases the risk of physical and sexual assault.**
Young people under age 21 who drink are more likely to carry out or be the victim of a physical or sexual assault after drinking than others their age who do not drink.
- Can lead to other problems.**
Drinking can cause teens to have trouble in school or with the law. Teens who drink are more likely to use other drugs than teens who don't.
- Can lead to developing an alcohol use disorder.**
Alcohol Use Disorders (AUDs) are medical conditions that doctors diagnose when someone's drinking causes them distress or harm. In 2014 about 679,000 young people ages 12-17 had an AUD. Even more important, the younger the use of alcohol the more likely one is to develop an AUD later in life.

Cats Connected: Alcohol and Drug Prevention Awareness

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How Does Drug Use Affect Your High School Grades?

By: Just Think Twice at <https://www.justthinktwice.gov/how-does-drug-use-affect-your-high-school-grades>



Did you know that your brain develops until the age of 25? Anything that you do to disrupt this process—including substance use—will affect how your brain develops.

During the brain's development stage, any type of trauma and/or changes in the brain's wiring could affect brain function. Drug use is one of the ways that can mess up the wiring. How?

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), the brain relies on chemicals called neurotransmitters to get messages from one part of the brain to the other. Each neurotransmitter attaches to its own kind of receptor—like how a key fits into a lock. This allows messages to travel through the brain on the right path. **When you use drugs, it interferes with the normal traffic patterns that the neurotransmitters use.** The chemical structure in the drugs can imitate and fool the receptors, lock on to them and alter the activity of the nerve cells. This "alteration" can result in messages going in the wrong direction, and reset the way your brain should act or react.

Ultimately this affects the way your brain processes and retains information—and how you think, learn, remember, focus, and concentrate. Research shows that there is a definite link between teen substance abuse and how well you do in school. **Teens who abuse drugs have lower grades, a higher rate of absence from school and other activities, and an increased potential for dropping out of school.**



Although we all know or hear stories about people who use drugs and still get great grades, this is not typical. Most people who use drugs regularly don't consistently do well in school.

Studies show that marijuana, for example, affects your attention, memory, and ability to learn. Its effects can last for days or weeks after the drug wears off. So, if you are smoking marijuana daily, you are not functioning at your best.

Students who smoke marijuana tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school. One recent marijuana study showed that **heavy marijuana use in your teen years and continued into adulthood can reduce your IQ up to as much as 8 points.**

High school dropout rates have also risen as a result of substance abuse.

A study of teens in 12th grade (16-18 years of age) who dropped out of school before graduation are more likely than their peers to be users of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana and other illicit drugs.

Illicit drug use among dropouts was higher than for those in school (31.4 percent vs. 18.2 percent). Dropouts were more likely to be current marijuana users than those in school (27.3 percent vs. 15.3 percent) and non-medical users of prescription drugs (9.5 percent vs. 5.1 percent).

Teens who smoke, drink alcohol, binge drink or use marijuana or other drugs are more likely than non-users to drop out of school and less likely than non-users to graduate from high school, attend college or obtain a college degree. One study found that nearly **one-third of school dropouts indicate that their use of alcohol or other drugs was an important contributor in their decision to leave school.**

Lock Your Meds!

MEDucation: A Dose of Knowledge

By: National Safety Partnership at <http://www.lockyourmeds.org/meducation/>

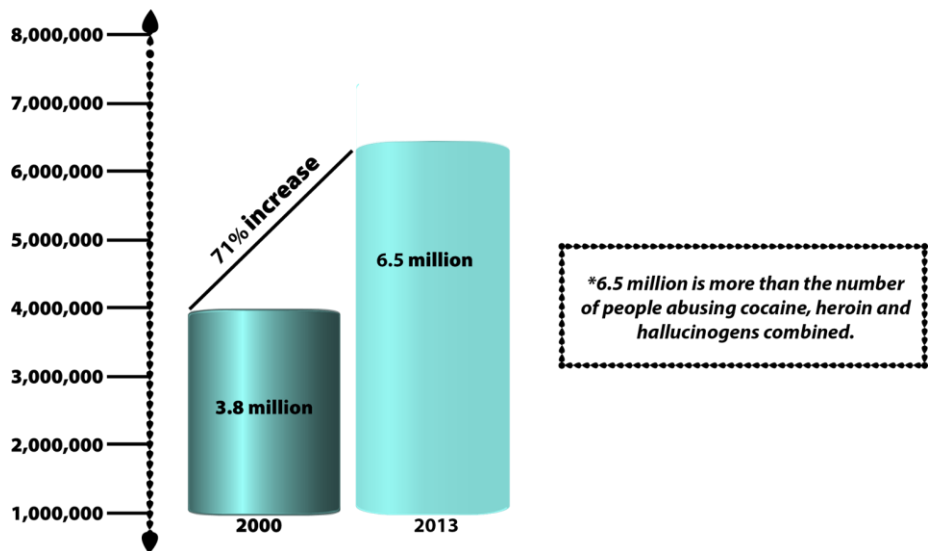
Lesson 1: Your Medicine. Their Drugs.



Prescription medicines taken properly help heal illness, relieve pain, control disease and bring balance to your life. But when others take your medications, they can be very dangerous.

An alarming trend is emerging. Every day, more than **1,700 children and young adults** begin experimenting with prescription drugs. These drugs range from pain relievers and depressants to stimulants and over-the-counter (OTC) medicine.

6.5 million Americans abuse prescription drugs



(Source: 2013 National Survey on Drug Use & Health)



Some disturbing facts:

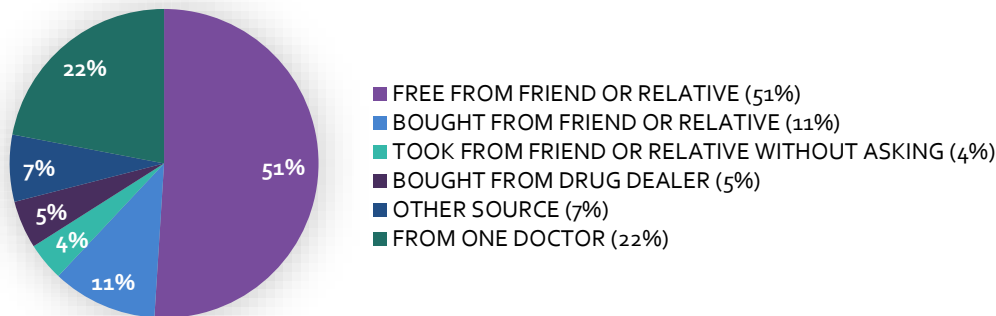
- 🐾 **One in four teens** abused prescription drugs.
- 🐾 **3.1 million 12 to 25 year olds** used OTC cough and cold medications at least once to get high.
- 🐾 Prescription drugs are the **#1 choice** among 12-13 year olds.
- 🐾 **13 is the mean age** of the non-prescribed use of sedatives and stimulants.
- 🐾 **One in seven boys** and one in five girls has shared or borrowed a prescription drug.
- 🐾 Nearly **one in 10 high school seniors** admit abusing pain relievers.
- 🐾 **Girls age 12-17** are more likely than boys to misuse OTC medications, but the trend reverses with 18- to 25-year-olds.

Lesson 2: Your nightstand. Their drug supplier.

What's in your medicine cabinet? On your nightstand or the kitchen counter? In your purse? Naturally, you keep prescription medicines and cold and cough remedies handy for you to take when needed. But, they are also handy for teens to take without you knowing it.

Adolescents believe that since the medicines were prescribed by a doctor, they provide an inexpensive, legal and "medically safe high." In the case of OTC remedies, most children have been given these medicines by their parents for common illnesses, such as fevers, colds and coughs. So, teens believe it is safe to take these drugs whenever they choose. The proliferation of pharmaceutical ads on television as well as the Internet and peer misinformation helps contribute to this attitude.

**Source of Pain Relievers for Abusers
Ages 12 and older**



More disturbing facts:

- 🐾 More teens have been offered prescription drugs than other illegal ones, except marijuana.
- 🐾 Four out of 10 teens believe prescription and OTC medicines are less addictive and dangerous than street drugs.
- 🐾 7.3 million young people believe there's "nothing wrong" with using non-prescribed medicines periodically and that parents "don't care as much if you get caught."
- 🐾 More than one-third say they feel peer pressure to take prescription or OTC drugs.

Lesson 3: Your rationale. Their reasons.

We often ask: Why? Teens give many reasons for abusing prescription and OTC drugs, such as wanting to "fit in," relieve depression and anxiety, help them cope with life's stresses, sleep better or increase their alertness and concentration power so they can do better in school. Some want to control their weight with stimulants. Others want to self-medicate to relieve pain. They want to experiment. They want to be accepted by their peers. They want to escape reality or make their reality more bearable.

The abuse of OTC drugs by teens is largely with cough and cold medicines that contain dextromethorphan (DXM) to get high. Some young people are also abusing laxatives, diuretics and diet pills to control their weight. Some herbal or "natural" products can be just as dangerous as diet pills because they act like a stimulant on the nervous system. The most commonly abused prescription drugs are:

Pain Relievers (Opioids)

Prescribed For:

Mild and Severe Pain
Coughs
Relieve Diarrhea

Sample Brand Names:

Adian	MS Contin	OxyContin
Dilaudid	Demerol	Roxicodone
Ultram	Lomotil	Percodan
Percocet	Darvon	Oramorph SR
Tylenol/ Codeine		
Robitussin/ Codeine		

Appeal to teenagers:

Can produce quick, intense feeling of pleasure followed by a sense of well-being and a calm drowsiness.

Stimulants (Uppers)

Prescribed For:

Respiratory Problems
Sleep disorders (Narcolepsy)
ADHD
Treatment of Obesity
Depression

Sample Brand Names:

Adderall	Ritalin	Dexedrine
Focalin	Methylin	Concerta

Appeal to teenagers:

Increases alertness, attention and energy, feeling of extreme joy, gives them energy to stay awake, increases concentration, become more talkative, and lose weight.

Depressants (Sedatives)

Prescribed For:

Anxiety
Tension
Sleep Disorders
Severe Stress Reactions
Panic Attacks

Sample Brand Names

Mebaral	Nembuta	Phenobarbital
Seconal	Soma	Klonopin
Xanax	Valium	Rozerem
Percocet	Librium	Halcion
Ativan	Ambien	Lunesta

Appeal to teenagers:

Causes euphoria or relaxation and sleep.

Lesson 4: Your lifesaver. Their life-taker.

When your doctor prescribes medicine for you, the effects are closely monitored. But when teenagers abuse medicines that are prescribed for someone else, no one is monitoring their dosage or frequency of use. They can become addicted, poisoned or even die from an overdose.

All too often, teens combine prescription or OTC drugs with other substances, like alcohol or marijuana, which can lead to dangerous consequences. And, sometimes they attend “pharm or rainbow parties” where various prescription medications are dumped into a bowl and randomly ingested.

Why should families be concerned?

More people die of drug overdose than from **car crashes or guns**.
 Death by overdose involving prescription drugs **have quadrupled** since 1999.
1.5 million people 12 and older received treatment for prescription drugs in 2013.
 People who abuse prescription drugs are **40 times more likely to use heroin**.



The WPHS SAFE Program needs your help to bring bullying prevention, suicide prevention, and drug and alcohol prevention programs to our students. If you would like to make a donation to implement these programs, please go to schoolpay.com. Your support may save a life.

Lesson 5: Your solutions. Their protection.

Quite frequently young people merely open the medicine cabinet and there before them is a variety of drugs available for the taking: pain pills for post-surgery; sleeping pills from an overseas airplane trip; cough medicine from last season’s flu. The time to act is now. You are the key to your child’s drug-free future.

Take the following **preventative steps**:

Remove drugs from your medicine cabinet and hide them, lock them up or take them out of your house.

Safeguard all medicines that have to remain at home by monitoring quantities and controlling access.

Take inventory by writing down the names and amounts of medications you currently have and regularly check to see if anything is missing.

If your child is on prescribed medication, monitor the dosages and refills. **Set clear rules**, such as not sharing and always following proper dosages.

Warn your youngsters that taking prescription or OTC drugs without a doctor’s supervision can be just as dangerous and potentially lethal as taking street drugs.

Supervise your child’s **Internet** use: many pharmacy sites are not regulated and will sell your child medications without prescriptions.

Properly dispose of old, expired or unused medicines in the trash. Call your local Sheriff’s or police department for local “take-back” collection information. **DO NOT** flush medications down the drain or toilet, unless the label indicates it is safe to do so.