

Signs, Symptoms, and Help Teens Who Have Substance Abuse Issues

Understanding Substance Use, Abuse and Addiction

Teens experiment with vaping/drugs for many reasons. Some try because of curiosity, to improve performance, ease stress, escape problems, peer pressure, or just to have a good time. Abuse of substances is more about the reasons teens turn to drugs and the consequences of their drug use. If substance abuse is causing problems in a teen's life - school, home, relationships - they are more likely to have an addiction problem.

Risk Factors, Warning Signs and What To Do If You Suspect

Risk Factors

Family history
Depression/anxiety
Need for acceptance
Friend group
Exposure to drugs
Low coping skills
Low self-esteem
Lack of supervision
Lack of discipline
Dysfunctional relationships

Warning Signs

Dishonesty
Suspicious behavior
Drop in school performance
Drop in school attendance
Defensiveness
Collecting lighters
Fruit pectin (interferes with drug tests)
Cryptic text messages
Sneaking out/theft
Dilated pupils/bloodshot eyes

What To Do If You Suspect

Talk with your teen about their life
Ask open-ended questions
Tell me more about...
Describe how you are feeling...
How do you feel about drugs?
When was the last time you used drugs?
Do you want to stop using drugs?
Where do you get the drugs/money
Would you pass a drug test today?
Search room, clothing, backpack

Actions To Take If Your Teen Is Using Drugs

Many parents hope their teen is just going through a phase. Substance abuse cannot be ignored.

- Limit access (no phone, internet, electronic devices, car/transportation, going out)
- Control what is yours: house, money, resources (teens rights are to have shelter, food and school).
- Set up expectations and follow through: commitment and consistency to a behavior plan is critical. If your teen is willing, involve them in the plan. This way they know what is expected and what the consequences are for breaking of the plan.
- Drug test your teen
 - Occupational Health Care International, Orem and SLC www.ohcidrugtest.com
 - Walmart drug tests <https://www.walmart.com/c/kp/drug-test-kits>
 - Physician/doctor's office
- Call the police anytime you suspect they are using, are defiant, or you find evidence of drug use. Police can drug test a teen. Charge a teen. Search house and belongings of teens. (police know all the tricks of where drugs can be hidden)
- Take teen to a behavioral unit (police can take them at your request - call 911 for pick-up)
 - Vantage point (juvenile probation): 1189 300 N, Provo, UT - open 24 hours (801) 373-2215
 - Wasatch Mental Health - Recovery Outreach Center (ROC) (801) 373-7393
 - Provo Canyon www.PCBH.com 1-888-488-8949
 - Any hospital with a behavioral unit - go to the emergency room for an assessment
 - Free referral helpline: <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

For more information go to:

24/7 addiction treatment helpline 1-800-610-(HOPE) 4673

Utah Drug and Alcohol Program and Treatments for Youth: www.addicted.org/utah-adolescent

<https://www.fda.gov/TobaccoProducts/PublicHealthEducation/ProtectingKidsfromTobacco>

Vaping and Substance Abuse In Teenagers

What Is Vaping? (Electronic Nicotine Delivery System/ E-cigarettes)

Vaping refers to the act of inhaling and exhaling e-liquid/ e-juice. The e-liquid is a combination of nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals. The battery powers the heating component, which heats up the e-liquid/juice. As a result, the device produces water vapor. Users inhale this vapor into their lungs.

Kids and teens are targeted with juices flavored such as: cotton candy, bubble gum, mint, vanilla, and fruit flavored. There are no FDA regulations on what is in the juice. Manufacturers are not required to post ingredients.

One popular brand is JUUL. It is small in size, and it looks like a USB device. When using a JUUL it is often referred to as JUULing. Clothing brands now offer hoodies, pants, and shirts with compartments to hide vaping devices.

Types of vaping devices include the following: E-cigarettes, which resemble traditional cigarettes, hookahs, vape pens, advanced personal vaporizers (also known as “mods”), JUUL (small device that looks like a USB drive).

Facts On Vaping

A 2017 study shows 1 in 5 students from 9th-12 grade admitted to vaping. Moreover, among the high school seniors, 24 percent reported vaping daily. The US surgeon general reported that e-cigarette use among high school students had increased by 900 percent.

Vaping juice can use high concentration levels of nicotine. Evidence shows that in some cases a person would need to smoke 40 cigarettes to reach the same nicotine level as inhaling one e-cigarette.

Vaping increases the likelihood that a teen will abuse other substances. Vaping devices are used to inhale THC, the psychoactive chemical in marijuana.

The THC content in e-liquid concentrates can range between 50 and 90 percent, as compared to 5 -20 percent in marijuana. Making THC extremely toxic and highly addictive in juice form.

Why Teens Like to Vape

- Nicotine is both a sedative and a stimulant. After inhaling, nicotine rapidly enters the bloodstream and reaches the brain within 8 to 20 seconds causing a “high” then for 2 hours causing a sense of relaxation.
- Nicotine stimulates the adrenal glands, which results in the release of adrenaline and users feel a “kick” in energy.
- Nicotine causes the release of dopamine in the pleasure and motivation areas of the brain. The user experiences a pleasurable sensation.
- Nicotine can also act as a sedative. Consuming nicotine is also linked to raised alertness, euphoria, and a sensation of being relaxed.
- Nicotine results in increased levels of beta-endorphin, which reduces anxiety.
- Tolerance increases with the amount of nicotine consumed and people require higher doses to enjoy the same initial effects.
- With regular nicotine use the body stops creating dopamine (the brain’s natural mood stabilizer) which can cause users to feel depressed, anxiety, loss of motivation, and unhappy once the nicotine has left the body.
- Nicotine is highly addictive, It is considered to be at least as hard as quitting heroin.
- People who consume nicotine and then stop experience withdrawal symptoms, which may include: cravings, a sense of emptiness, anxiety, depression, moodiness, irritability, difficulty focusing.

- A study carried out at the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that nicotine consumption makes other drugs more addictive.

The Marijuana Epidemic

Facts on Marijuana

- Polls show in 2017 over 50% of Americans want marijuana legal, in 1975 less than 8%. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that the less harmful teens perceive a drug to be, the more the use of that drug increases.
- A study showed that 65% of teenagers in 2017 think marijuana is not harmful. In 2017, 10.3% of 12th graders reported driving after using marijuana in the past two weeks.
- In 1990 the THC (the psychoactive and addictive ingredient in pot) levels in a marijuana was 3% concentrate, THC levels in marijuana in 2017 are as high as 60% concentrate.
- Teenagers can order marijuana online without proof of age (EBAY...), use VENMO to pay dealers, and get THC in juice form for vaping devices.
- In 2015 2% of 8th graders reported daily use of weed. In 2018 8% of 8th graders reported daily use of weed. 27% of sophomores reported using weed at least monthly.

Why Teens Like Marijuana

Marijuana activates the endocannabinoid system, which causes the pleasurable feelings or "high" and stimulates the release of dopamine in the brain's reward centers, reinforcing the behavior.

Low doses of marijuana's active ingredient, THC, have been shown to decrease anxiety, stabilize moods, help users to feel calm.

Teens will use marijuana in friend groups. Users feel a sense of friendship, unity, and connection.

Side Effects of Marijuana Use

Learning and memory. Chronic marijuana use is associated with a loss of IQ points in teenagers and linked to decrease in school performance, motivation, and attendance. Studies show a decrease in overall brain activity when THC is found in the bloodstream. (THC is different than CBD - cannabis oil is also found in marijuana.)

Increased risk for mental health problems. High doses of THC have been shown to increase anxiety. Marijuana use has been linked with depression and anxiety, as well as suicidal thoughts among teens. Smoking marijuana during adolescence may increase the risk for developing psychosis.

Since THC affects areas of the frontal cortex involved in decision making, using it can make you more likely to engage in risky behavior, such as unprotected sex, getting in a car with someone who's been drinking or is high, truancy, lying, stealing, and use of heroin, cocaine, crystal meth, and opioids.

Preventive Measures:

- Know your child's friends.
- Eat together.
- Find out how your child feels about vaping/drugs, ask if they have seen it and how they handle it.
- 10 compliments/positive interactions to 1 command/reprimand.
- Set a good example.

Responsive Measures:

- Limit access (no phone, internet, electronic devices, car/transportation, going out).
- Control what is yours: house, money, resources (teens rights are to have shelter, food and school).
- Set up expectations and follow through: commitment and consistency to a behavior plan is critical.
- Drug test your teen (dollar store, Walmart, doctor's office, police officer).
- Call the police anytime you suspect they are using, are defiant, or you find evidence of drug use. Police can drug test a teen. Charge a teen. Search house and belongings of teens.

- Take teen to a behavioral unit: Wasatch Mental Health, Vantage Point, Provo Canyon, any hospital with a behavioral unit. (Police can take them at your request - call 911 for pick-up of teen.)

What Students Can Do if They See Substance Abuse At School

Students can report any vaping and/or substance abuse to school administration, teacher, counselor, or resource officer.

Students can use the
SAFEUT CRISIS TEXT & TIP LINE

The SafeUT Crisis Text and Tip Line is a statewide service that provides real-time crisis intervention to youth through texting and a confidential tip program – right from your smartphone or computer.

Students can anonymously report tips when they see vaping or substance abuse.

<https://safeut.med.utah.edu/>

