



The Beacon

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“Guiding your way to better health management”

Teen Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Many teens try alcohol, tobacco, or drugs, but using these substances is not safe or legal. Some teens try these substances only a few times and stop. Others can't control their urges or cravings for them. This is substance abuse.

Teens may try a number of substances, including cigarettes, alcohol, household chemicals (inhalants), prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and illegal drugs. Marijuana is the illegal drug that teens use most often.

Why do teens abuse drugs and alcohol?

Teens use alcohol and other drugs for many reasons. They may do it because they want to fit in with friends or certain groups. They may also take a drug or drink alcohol because they like the way it makes them feel. Or they may believe that it makes them more grown up. Teens tend to try new things and take risks, and they may take drugs or drink alcohol because it seems exciting.

Teens with family members who have problems with alcohol or other drugs are more likely to have serious

substance abuse problems. Also, teens who feel that they are not connected to or valued by their parents are at greater risk. Teens with poor self-esteem or emotional or mental health problems, such as depression, also are at increased risk.

What problems can teen substance abuse cause?

Substance abuse can lead to serious problems such as poor schoolwork, loss of friends, problems at home, and lasting legal problems. Alcohol and drug abuse is a leading cause of teen death or injury related to car accidents, suicides, violence, and drowning. Substance abuse can increase the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, because of unprotected sex.

Even casual use of certain drugs can cause severe medical problems, such as an overdose or brain damage. Many illegal drugs today are made in home labs, so they can vary greatly in strength. These drugs also may contain bacteria, dangerous chemicals, and other unsafe substances.

What are the signs of substance abuse?

It's important to be aware of the signs

that your teen may be abusing alcohol, drugs, or other substances. Some of the signs include:

- Red eyes and health complaints, such as being overly tired. If your teen often uses over-the-counter eyedrops, he or she may be trying to cover up red eyes caused by smoking marijuana.
- Less interest in school, a drop in grades, and skipping classes or school altogether.
- New friends who have little interest in their families or school activities.
- Chemical-soaked rags or papers, which may mean that your teen is inhaling vapors. Another sign of using inhalants is paint or other stains on your teen's clothing, hands, or face.

What should you do if you find out that your teen is using alcohol, tobacco, or drugs?

If your teen is using alcohol, tobacco, or drugs, take it seriously. One of the most important things you can do is to talk openly with your teen about the problem. Urge him or her to do the same.

The type of treatment your teen needs depends on the level of substance

abuse. For example, if a teen has tried drugs or alcohol only a few times, talking openly about the problem may be all that you need to do to help your teen stop his or her substance use. But if a teen has a substance abuse problem, then he or she needs to be seen by a doctor and/or by a counselor. If your teen is addicted to a drug or alcohol, he or she may need to have detoxification treatment or a treatment that replaces the substance with medicine.

Returning to substance abuse, called relapse, is common after treatment. It is not a failure on the part of your teen or the treatment program.

Can teen substance use and abuse be prevented?

Talking openly and honestly with your teen and keeping a healthy home life may prevent your teen from trying alcohol and drugs.

You can help prevent substance use by using these tips:

- Talk to your child early about what you expect in his or her behavior toward alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- Keep your teen busy with meaningful activities, such as sports, church programs, or other groups.
- Expect your teen to follow the household rules. Set reasonable penalties for bad behavior, and consistently carry them out.
- Keep talking with your teen. Praise your teen for even the little things he or she does well.
- Know your child's friends. Having friends who avoid cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs may be your teen's best protection from substance abuse.



Ask A Nurse

Q: Is it possible to be

addicted to sugar?

A: Not the way you can be addicted to a drug. But sugar triggers the release of opiates in the brain, which makes you feel good.

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Q: If the orange juice label says "not from concentrate," does that mean it's better for you?

A: Not really. "Not from concentrate" juice is nutritionally almost identical to its "from concentrate" counterpart.

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Q: Can you get too much fiber? Adding up my fiber from all sources, I get 40 g a day.

A: It depends. We recommend 20 to 35 g daily--an optimum amount to prevent constipation, heart disease, and possibly cancer. Getting more fiber than that means that you absorb less of important minerals such as zinc, iron, and calcium.

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Q: My teenage daughter wants to be a total vegan, but I'm not sure that's safe. Is it?

A: It can be safe--and even healthy--if she chooses the right foods. She can't just eat bagels, bananas, and soft drinks. There are three things to keep in mind: 1. Concentrate on calcium from calcium-fortified orange juice or soy milk. 2. Encourage her to eat whole grains, beans, nuts, seeds, and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. 3. Provide her with a multivitamin.

July is Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month

Juvenile arthritis (JA) refers to any form of arthritis or an arthritis-related

condition that develops in children or teenagers who are less than 18 years of age. Approximately 294,000 children under the age of 18 are affected by pediatric arthritis and rheumatologic conditions. For more information contact the Arthritis Foundation at 1-800-283-7800 or via their web site at www.arthritis.org.



Recipe Corner

All American Potato Salad

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 lb. new potatoes (about 12), cubed, cooked and cooled
- 1/2 cup chopped green peppers
- 1/2 cup chopped onions
- 12 slices OSCAR MAYER Center Cut Bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces, cooked
- 1/2 cup MIRACLE WHIP Dressing
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. black pepper

Directions

- COMBINE** first 4 ingredients in large bowl.
- MIX** remaining ingredients. Add to potato mixture; mix lightly.
- REFRIGERATE** several hours or until chilled.

Med-Cert provides:

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