

YOUR CHOICES

Your Consequences!



Substance use can become substance abuse without you even realizing when or how you crossed the line. Alcohol, tobacco, and other abused substances do not have to be a part of your life. You don't need them to be happy, make friends, or live a good life. You can choose to live a healthy, abuse-free life. You can make that decision for many reasons.

Arm yourself with facts. Taking drugs can cause irreparable damage to your relationships, your judgment, your looks, and your health. Take a look at these facts:

Alcohol

- Alcohol affects your brain, leading to a loss of coordination, poor judgment, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses, and even blackouts.
- Alcohol can damage every organ in your body. It is absorbed directly into your bloodstream and can increase your risk for a variety of life-threatening diseases.
- Alcohol depresses your central nervous system, lowers your inhibitions, and impairs your judgment. Drinking can lead to risky behaviors, including having unprotected sex. This may expose you to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases or cause unwanted pregnancy.
- Alcohol can kill you. Drinking large amounts of alcohol can lead to coma or even death.

- In 2002, nearly 30 percent of drivers age 15 to 20 who died in traffic accidents had been drinking alcohol. (Source Traffic Safety Facts 2002: Young Drivers, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. U.S. Department of Transportation, 2003.)

- Alcohol can hurt you—even if you're not the one drinking. If you're around people who are drinking, you have an increased risk of being seriously injured, involved in car crashes, or affected by violence. At the very least, you may have to deal with people who are sick, out of control, or unable to take care of themselves.

One drink can make you fail a breath test.

In some states, people under the age of 21 who are found to have any amount of alcohol in their systems can lose their driver's license, be subject to a heavy fine, or have their car permanently taken away.

- Alcohol can make you gain weight and give you bad breath.

Tobacco

- Smoking is the most common cause of lung cancer and a leading cause of cancer of the mouth, throat, bladder, pancreas and kidney. Smokeless tobacco can cause mouth cancer, tooth loss, and other health problems.

- Tobacco hinders your body's development. Smoking is particularly harmful for teens because your body is still growing and changing. The 200 known poisons in cigarette smoke affect your normal development and can cause life-threatening diseases, such as chronic bronchitis, heart disease, and stroke.



- The poisons in cigarettes dry out your skin, yellow your teeth and fingers and wrinkle your face. Some studies suggest smoking may even cause premature gray hair and hair loss. Smokeless tobacco use stains your teeth, causes foul breath and eats away mouth tissue.

- Smoking puts a drag on your athletic ability, causing shortness of breath and dizziness. Chewing tobacco causes dehydration.

- Smoking puts the health of your friends and family at risk. Second hand smoke has been proven to be a health risk to others. (Source: American Lung Association.)

- Tobacco contains nicotine, a powerfully addictive substance. Three-quarters of young people who use tobacco daily continue to do so because they find it hard to quit.

- Tobacco can kill you. Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in this country. More than 400,000 Americans die from tobacco-related causes each year, and most of them began using tobacco before the age of 18.

Meth

- Meth is a crystal-like powdered substance that sometimes comes in large rock-like chunks. When the powder flakes off the rock, the shards look like glass, which is another nickname for meth.

- Immediately after smoking or injection, the user experiences an intense sensation, called a "rush" or "flash," that lasts only a few minutes and is described as extremely pleasurable. Snorting or swallowing meth produces euphoria - a high, but not a rush. After the initial "rush," there is typically a state of high agitation that in some individuals can lead to violent behavior. Other possible immediate effects include increased wakefulness and insomnia, decreased appetite, irritability/aggression, anxiety, nervousness, convulsions and heart attack.

- Meth is addictive, and users can develop a tolerance quickly, needing larger amounts to get high. In some cases, users forego food and sleep and take more meth every few hours for days, 'binging' until they run out of the drug or become too disorganized to continue. Chronic use can cause paranoia, hallucinations, repetitive behavior (such as compulsively cleaning, grooming or disassembling and assembling objects), and delusions of parasites or insects crawling under the skin. Users can obsessively scratch their skin to get rid of these imagined insects. Long-term use, high dosages, or both can bring on full-blown toxic psychosis (often exhibited as violent, aggressive behavior). This violent, aggressive behavior is usually coupled with extreme paranoia. Meth can also cause strokes and death. (Source: www.drugfree.org)



Inhalants

- Examples of products kids abuse to get high include model airplane glue, nail polish remover, cleaning fluids, hair spray, gasoline, the propellant in aerosol whipped cream, spray paint, fabric protector, air conditioner fluid (freon), cooking spray and correction fluid.

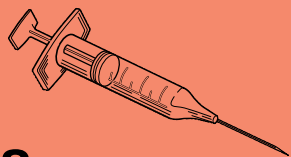
- Within seconds of inhalation, the user experiences intoxication along with other effects similar to those produced by alcohol. Alcohol-like effects may include slurred speech, an inability to coordinate movements, dizziness, confusion and delirium. Nausea and vomiting are other common side effects. In addition, users may experience light-headedness, hallucinations, and delusions.

Know the facts

Meth labs, along with sales of the drug, breed crime, including burglary, identity theft, domestic violence, and even murder.

- Compulsive use and a mild withdrawal syndrome can occur with long-term inhalant abuse. Additional symptoms exhibited by long-term inhalant abusers include weight loss, muscle weakness, disorientation, inattentiveness, lack of coordination, irritability, and depression.

- After heavy use of inhalants, abusers may feel drowsy for several hours and experience a lingering headache. Because intoxication lasts only a few minutes, abusers frequently seek to prolong their high by continuing to inhale repeatedly over the course of several hours. By doing this, abusers can suffer loss of consciousness and death. (Source: www.drugfree.org)



Steroids

- Anabolic steroids are a group of powerful compounds closely related to the male sex hormone testosterone. Current legitimate medical uses include treatment of certain kinds of anemia. Body builders, long-distance runners, cyclists and various other athletes who claim that steroids give them a competitive advantage and/or improve their physical appearance use these drugs illegally.

- Anabolic steroids are taken orally or injected, and athletes and other abusers take them typically in cycles of weeks or months, rather than continuously, in patterns called cycling. Cycling involves taking multiple doses of steroids over a specific period of time, stopping for a period, and starting again. In addition, users frequently combine several different types of steroids to maximize their effectiveness while minimizing negative effects, a process known as stacking.

- Reports indicate that use of anabolic steroids produces increases in lean muscle mass, strength, and ability to train longer and harder. Many health hazards of short-term effects are reversible. The major effects of anabolic steroid use include liver tumors, jaundice, fluid retention, and high blood pressure. Additional side effects include the following: for men shrinking of the testicles, reduced

sperm count, infertility, baldness, development of breasts; for women growth of facial hair, changes in or cessation of the menstrual cycle, deepened voice; for adolescents growth halted prematurely through premature skeletal maturation and accelerated puberty changes. Researchers report that users may suffer from paranoid jealousy, extreme irritability, delusions, and impaired judgment stemming from feelings of invincibility.

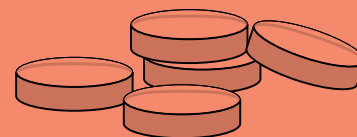
- Long-term, high-dose effects of steroid use are largely unknown. (Source: www.drugfree.org)

Ecstasy

- Taken in pill form, users sometimes take Ecstasy at “raves,” clubs and other parties to keep on dancing and for mood enhancement.

- Users report that Ecstasy produces intensely pleasurable effects – including an enhanced sense of self-confidence and energy. Effects include feelings of peacefulness, acceptance and empathy. Other effects can include involuntary teeth clenching, a loss of inhibitions, transfixion on sights and sounds, nausea, blurred vision, chills and/or sweating. Increases in heart rate and blood pressure, as well as seizures, are also possible. The stimulant effects of the drug enable users to dance for extended periods, which when combined with the hot crowded conditions usually found at raves, can lead to severe dehydration and hyperthermia or dramatic increases in body temperature. This can lead to muscle breakdown and kidney, liver and cardiovascular failure. Cardiovascular failure has been reported in some of the Ecstasy-related fatalities. After-effects can include sleep problems, anxiety and depression.

- Repeated use of Ecstasy ultimately may damage the cells that produce serotonin, which has an important role in the regulation of mood, appetite, pain, learning and memory. There already is research suggesting Ecstasy use can disrupt or interfere with memory. (Source: www.drugfree.org)



Know the facts

Teens who abuse steroids before the typical adolescent growth spurt risk staying short and never reaching their full adult height.

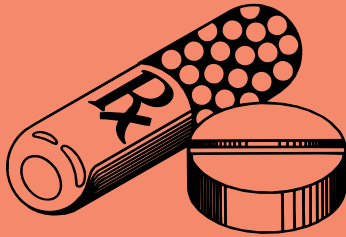
Prescription Stimulants

• A class of drugs that enhance brain activity. Prescription stimulants were used historically to treat asthma, obesity, neurological disorders, and a variety of other ailments, before their potential for abuse and addiction became apparent.

• Medically, they are now prescribed for only a few health conditions, including narcolepsy, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and short-term treatment of obesity. They are swallowed and may be injected when abused.

• Stimulants increase the amount of norepinephrine and dopamine in the brain, which increases blood pressure and heart rate, constricts blood vessels, increases blood glucose, and increases breathing. Effects can feel like an increase alertness, attention, and energy along with a sense of euphoria. There is also the potential for cardiovascular failure (heart attack) or lethal seizures.

• Stimulants can be addictive in that individuals begin to use them compulsively. Taking high doses of some stimulants repeatedly over a short time can lead to feelings of hostility or paranoia. Additionally, taking high doses of a stimulant may result in dangerously high body temperatures and an irregular heartbeat. There is also the potential for cardiovascular failure (heart attack) or lethal seizures. (Source: www.drugfree.org)



Prescription Sedatives

• Prescription medications that act as central nervous system depressants. Barbiturates are prescription sedatives or “sleeping pills” and benzodiazepines are prescription “tranquilizers.”

• Medically, barbiturates are prescribed for acute anxiety, tension and sleep disorders. Benzodiazepines are prescribed for anxiety, acute stress reactions, and panic attacks. When abused, they are swallowed or injected.

• Prescription sedatives and tranquilizers can cause euphoria. They also slow normal brain function, which may result in slurred speech, shallow breathing, sluggishness, fatigue, disorientation and lack of coordination or dilated pupils. During the first few days of taking a prescribed sedative or tranquilizer, a person usually feels sleepy and uncoordinated,

but as the body becomes accustomed to the effects of the drug, these feelings begin to disappear. Higher doses cause impairment of memory, judgment and coordination, irritability, paranoid and suicidal ideation. Using Prescription sedatives and tranquilizers with other substances - particularly alcohol - can slow breathing, or slow both the heart and respiration, and possibly lead to death.

• Continued use can lead to physical dependence

and - when use is reduced or stopped abruptly - withdrawal symptoms may occur. (Source: NIDA)

Know the facts

According to the latest research study from the Center for Substance Abuse Research, approximately 8% of college undergraduate students report using prescription stimulants that were not prescribed for them at least once in their lifetime.

For the lowdown on other illegal drugs, their effects and their consequences check out www.freevibe.com. This website offers specific scientific information, drug facts, current research on illegal drug and drug addiction.

Other helpful sources include: www.drugfree.org and www.checkyourself.com sponsored by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at www.ncadi.samhsa.gov also offers information and help for drug addiction. NCADI can also be reached at 1-800-729-6686 or TDD 800-487-4889. Linea gratis en español 877-767-8432.

To share your thoughts and feelings about substance abuse, submit your story on the Partnership for a Drug-Free America’s web site at www.drugfree.org/portal/stories.

Know the Facts:

Know the laws.

It is illegal to buy or possess alcohol if you are under 21. It is illegal for anyone under 18 to buy cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, or tobacco-related products.

Get the facts.

One drink can make you fail a breath test. In some states, people under the age of 21 who are found to have any amount of alcohol in their systems can lose their driver's license, be subject to a heavy fine, or have their car permanently taken away.



More than 1 million teens become addicted to tobacco each year. Roughly one-third of them will eventually die from a tobacco-related disease.

Marijuana use is addictive. About 60 percent of teens in drug treatment programs are there because of marijuana.

Stay informed.

“Binge” drinking means having five or more drinks on one occasion. About 15 percent of teens are binge drinkers in any given month. Approximately 105,000 Americans die annually from alcohol-related causes. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Population Estimates 1998, Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999.)

Mixing alcohol with medications or illicit drugs is extremely dangerous and can lead to accidental death. For example, alcohol-medication interactions may be a factor in at least 25 percent of emergency room admissions.

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse found teens with a “D” average or below more than four times as likely to have used marijuana in the last year as those with an “A” average.

Don't be “myth-taken.”

Beer and wine aren't safer. One 12-ounce beer has about as much alcohol as a 1.5-ounce shot of liquor, a 5-ounce glass of wine, or a wine cooler.

Some smokers claim tobacco or marijuana use helps them relax. But that's not true. Smoking tobacco actually increases feelings of stress and nervousness. Smoking dope can lead to anxiety, panic attacks, depression, and paranoia. Use drug-free strategies to calm nerves such as exercise or meditation.

Understand.

If adults can drink, teens should be able to, too. Same goes for smoking. Wrong. Teens' bodies are still developing and alcohol has a greater impact on their physical and mental well-being. So too does tobacco use. (Besides, using alcohol and tobacco are not healthy choices for adults either.) For example, people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin at age 21. Also, addiction to tobacco is hard to control. More than 90 percent of teens who use tobacco daily experience at least one symptom of withdrawal when they try to quit.

It's tough to say: “No.” But you can. How? Try: “No, thanks.” Or “I'm not interested.” Or “I don't drink, smoke or use drugs.” People should respect your decision and remember that you're in good company—a majority of teens don't drink, or smoke or do any kind of drugs.

Questions and Answers

Q: Are drugs really that bad for you?

A: Yes, they are. People who use drugs often say they feel great at first. They think drugs are the best thing that has ever happened to them. But those are feelings that don't last. Over time, drug users need more and more drugs to get the same high, increasing their addiction and potential for overdose. Even if users never OD, drugs can ruin their health, their relationships and their education. Users end up doing some really stupid things to satisfy their addiction.

Q: What's wrong with a little experimentation? Why can't some people handle drinking and drugs?

A: There's no perfect answer to this question. But when someone uses drugs or drinks they are usually avoiding dealing with issues in their life. He may feel lonely or may struggle with pressures of grades or parents. She may feel like she has no friends or family to support her. Drugs deceive users into feeling like they're escaping those troubles and finding a life that is easier. But after a while, users can't escape as easily. Drug use doesn't get rid of problems. It just creates more. Often users end up addicted, or worse overdosed, from chasing the feeling of that first high.

For people whose families have a history of alcoholism or addiction, experimenting can lead to dependency quickly because, like heart disease and cancer, substance abuse can run in families.

Q: I think my friend is using drugs. I want to talk with her about it. How?

A: Talking to a friend about their drug use, drinking or smoking is not easy. But if you care about your friend it is important to try. Here are some suggestions on how to start and what to say.

Make a plan. Think about the facts of your friend's situation and why you think he is struggling. Decide what you want to say and how you feel about the situation. Consider others who might support your efforts, such as other friends, a parent, a counselor or adult mentor. Try to speak in a tone that is assertive but not aggressive. Once you begin the talk, keep your cool and be supportive.

Tell your friend the changes you have seen in her. Have her grades slipped? Has his personality changed? Tell your friend how much you miss his old personality—the one that wasn't using. If you find talking directly to your friend too much, try writing a note to them about your feelings and concerns.

Don't forget to listen to your friend. Once you've expressed your feelings ask for her to respond.

Promise that you will help your friend find more help and that you will continue talking about the situation. Set a time when you will follow up.

Find additional resources at the Partnership for a Drug-Free America website: www.drugfree.org



What to Say to Your Friend About Drugs

- **I don't want anything to happen to you or for you to hurt yourself.**
- **We all count on you. Your brothers/sisters (if applicable) look up to you/care about you, as do I. What would they do if you were gone?**
- **What can I do to help you? I am here to support you.**
- **Are there other problems you want to talk about?**
- **Are you feeling pressure to use? Let's talk about it.**
- **I love you and I won't give up on you.**
- **If you need professional help or you need an adult to talk to, I can help you find someone.**
- **I will be here to help you and support you every step of the way.**