

Teen Health Kit for Parents

✓ New Trends in Teen Drug Abuse

The good news: Recent national data show that illicit drug use among teens has declined by more than 23 percent over the past five years. The decrease is especially marked in younger teens, according to the latest survey by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Exceptions to the decrease are use of non-crack cocaine, which was up among 10th graders, and alcohol use, which remained stable. In addition, the latest trend in teen drug abuse is abuse of pharmaceuticals.

In **Livingston County** 25% of 12th graders and 21% of 10th graders report using marijuana in the past 30 days—compared to 19% and 15% nationally, respectively. Thirty percent of 12th graders and 24% of 10th graders in Livingston County report using cigarettes in the past 30 days—compared to 25% and 16% nationally, respectively. Thirty-four percent of 12th graders in Livingston County report binge drinking (5 or more drinks in one sitting within the past 2 weeks) compared to 29% nationally. In addition 55% of 12th graders and 43% of 10th graders report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days—compared to 48% and 35% nationally, respectively.

Drugs Commonly Used by Teens

Alcohol. Alcohol is the number one drug problem among adolescents even though it is illegal for persons under 21 to purchase or drink it. Alcohol is associated with all the leading causes of death among teenagers, including traffic accidents, homicides and suicides, and is a factor in unprotected sex resulting in unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS.

Tobacco. It is also illegal for businesses to sell cigarettes to minors under age 18. Each day, however, over 2,000 adolescents become regular, daily smokers and about half of these kids will eventually die from a tobacco-related illness, including respiratory diseases, heart disease and cancer, according to the American Cancer Society.

Marijuana (*Pot, Hash, Weed or Grass*). Marijuana is the most commonly used illegal drug in the United States. Smoking marijuana produces a "high" feeling of well-being, relaxation and enhanced sensory perceptions. Short-term effects also include increased heart rate, impaired memory and paranoia or hallucinations. Among the long-term effects of smoking pot are an increased risk of cancer of the lungs and respiratory tract.

Ecstasy or MDMA (*Adam, XTC, Hug, Beans or Drug*). MDMA; better known as Ecstasy, is a synthetic drug that is usually produced in tablet form and taken orally. The drug is frequently used at all-night parties, or "raves," and produces a sense of intense well-being. Ecstasy interferes with memory and learning and may alter brain chemistry and structure. It also increases heart rate and blood pressure, and can interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature, potentially leading to a sharp increase in body temperature that causes liver, kidney and cardiovascular system failure and death. Even short-term use can cause heart attacks.

Methamphetamine (*Speed, Crank, Meth, Crystal Meth, Glass or Ice*). Methamphetamine is a powerful stimulant that produces increased alertness and elation, and can be swallowed, smoked, snorted or injected. Among its side effects are increased heart rate and blood pressure, decreased appetite, anxiety, paranoia and violent behavior. It also can cause irreversible damage to blood vessels in the brain, producing strokes. It is highly addictive.

Prescription Drugs

Teens may obtain prescription drugs from friends, by raiding their parent's medicine cabinets, misusing their own prescriptions or ordering prescriptions from Internet pharmacies. The following are prescription medications frequently abused by teens:

Vicodin and OxyContin. These are pain relievers that contain hydrocodone and oxycodone, respectively, and like other narcotics, cause a pleasurable, dreamy feeling. They also can produce drowsiness and breathing difficulties. Chronic use results in addiction, but one large dose could be lethal.

Dexedrine and Ritalin. These are stimulants that contain dextroamphetamine and methylphenidate, respectively. These medications are prescribed to treat attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, as well as narcolepsy, a sleep disorder. Abuse of these drugs can result in irregular heartbeat, dangerously high body temperatures or the potential for cardiovascular failure or lethal seizures.

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Dextromethorphan (*Dex, Robo, Skittels, Syrup, Triple-C or Tussin*). Some teens are abusing dextromethorphan (abbreviated DXM), the active ingredient found in many legal nonprescription cough medicines, which is safe and effective when used according to label directions. When abused in large amounts much higher than recommended, however, DXM can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and rapid heart rate. DXM abusers can experience mild distortions of color and sound, visual hallucinations and "out-of-body" sensations and loss of motor control. DXM is also sometimes abused with other drugs or alcohol, which can increase the dangerous physiological effects. A number of Web sites promote the abuse of DXM. The information on these sites ranges from recommending how much to take, suggesting other drugs to combine with DXM, instructing how to extract DXM from cough medicines and even selling a powder form of DXM for snorting. Parents should monitor their teens' Web use for these types of pro-drug-abuse sites.

Other Drugs

Inhalants. Inhalants are chemical vapors that are inhaled ("huffed" or "sniffed") to achieve quick intoxication. Teens often inhale these vapors from household substances, such as paint thinner, nail polish remover, glue, aerosols, butane and CD cleaners, which are cheap and easy to obtain. Inhalants slow the body's function and eventually can cause users to lose consciousness. High concentrations can cause death from suffocation. Regular abuse seriously harms vital organs, including the brain, heart, kidneys and liver.

WARNING SIGNS: It's not always easy to tell when teens are using drugs, because many signs or symptoms are common for youth this age. While there is no single warning sign for drug or alcohol use, some signs to look for include:

- Skipping classes or not doing well in school
- Unusual odors on their clothes or in their room
- Hostility or lack of cooperation
- Physical changes (red eyes, runny nose)
- Borrowing money often, or suddenly having extra cash
- Lack of interest in activities
- Significant mood changes
- Loss of interest in personal appearance
- Change in friends
- Heightened secrecy about actions or possessions

PREVENTION

The number one reason kids choose not to use drugs or alcohol is because they don't want to disappoint their parents. So...What Can YOU Do?

- ✓ Remember The **Power** of Parents: Teenagers still listen to their parents more than anybody else.
- ✓ **Provide** clear and consistent rules and consequences
- ✓ **Spend** time together as a family
- ✓ **Know** your child's whereabouts at all times – make sure their social environment is alcohol and drug free
- ✓ **Get to know** your child's friends and their parents
- ✓ **Don't be afraid** to ask questions and search your child's room and belongings if you suspect that your child is using drugs/alcohol or is involved in other risky behaviors
- ✓ **Be proud** of them and praise them when they do something good
- ✓ **Let them know** that you disapprove of and will not tolerate underage use of alcohol and tobacco and any use of illegal drugs

Local Resources: **Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse of Livingston County**
For Treatment/Referral: (585) 243-9210
(Geneseo Office)
OR (585) 335-5052 (Dansville Office)
For Prevention and Education Information:
(585) 243-9236
www.casa-livingston.org

Useful Web sites:
www.family.samhsa.gov
www.theantidrug.com
www.nida.nih.gov

Genesee Valley Health Partnership, Inc.
Healthy Communities that Care
(585)748-5146
www.gvhp.org



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