The Effect of Drugs on Teenagers in the 21st Century

Teen Substance Use Often Leads to Addiction

Table of Contents: Further Readings
1. According to the viewpoint, what percentage of high school students who are current users have a clinically-defined addiction to cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs?
2. Name one of the three substances noted in the viewpoint that have increased in use in recent years.
3. What percentage of parents believe that marijuana is a harmless drug, according to a study cited in the viewpoint?

- Three-fourths of high school students (75.6 percent, 10.0 million) have used addictive substances including cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana or cocaine.
- Almost half of high school students (46.1 percent, 6.1 million) are current users of these substances.
- Of high school students who have ever smoked a cigarette, had a drink of alcohol or used other drugs, 19.4 percent have a clinical substance use disorder, [that is, they meet clinical criteria for dependence; also referred to as addiction in this report] as do 33.3 percent of current users.

The Link Between Use and Addiction
Teen users are at significantly higher risk of developing an addictive disorder compared to adults, and the earlier they began using, the higher their risk. Nine out of 10 people who meet the clinical criteria for substance use disorders involving nicotine, alcohol or other drugs began smoking, drinking or using other drugs before they turned 18. People who begin using any addictive substance before age 15 are six and a half times as likely to develop a substance use disorder as those who delay use until age 21 or older (28.1 percent vs. 4.3 percent).

Alcohol is the most preferred addictive substance among high school students:
- 72.5 percent of high school students have drunk alcohol,
- 46.3 percent have smoked cigarettes,
- 36.8 percent have used marijuana and
- 14.8 percent have misused controlled prescription drugs.

Two-thirds (65.1 percent) of high school students have used more than one substance.

Consequences of Teen Substance Use
The immediate consequences of teen substance use are devastating, ranging from injuries and unintended pregnancies; to medical conditions such as asthma, depression, anxiety, psychosis and impaired brain function; to reduced academic performance and educational achievement; to criminal involvement and even death.

Financial Costs of Teen Substance Use
The financial costs of teen substance use and addiction include, for example, an estimated $68.0 billion associated with underage drinking alone and $14.4 billion associated with substance-related juvenile justice programs annually. In the long run, the consequences of adolescent substance use and addiction place enormous burdens on our health care, criminal justice, family court, education and social service systems.

Total costs to federal, state and local governments of substance use among the entire U.S. population are at least $467.7 billion per year—almost $1,500 for every person in America—driven primarily by those who began their use as teens. These costs are the result of accidents, diseases, crimes, child neglect and abuse, unplanned pregnancies, homelessness, unemployment and other outcomes of our failure to prevent substance use and treat this health condition. Addiction, whether to nicotine, alcohol or other drugs, is a complex brain disease that can be treated, but when left untreated, the consequences and their costs escalate.

The Making of an Epidemic
This report finds that the tragedy is not that we don't know what to do; rather, it is that we simply fail to do it. We know that risky substance use and addiction are the leading causes of preventable death and disability in the United States, and in most cases it begins in the teen years. Adolescence is, in fact, the critical period for the onset of substance use and its potentially debilitating consequences for two reasons:

- The regions of the brain that are critical to decision making, judgment, impulse control, emotion and memory are not yet fully developed in adolescence, making teens more prone than adults to taking risks, including experimenting with tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.
- Because the teen brain is still developing, addictive substances physically alter its structure and function faster and more intensely than in adults, interfering with brain development, further impairing judgment and heightening the risk of addiction.

**Progress Has Stalled**

Despite considerable declines in overall reported rates of current substance use since 1999, progress appears to have stalled and rates may once again be on the rise. The use of smokeless tobacco has been increasing since 2003. Declines in past 30 day cigarette smoking are slowing significantly, and national data suggest that current use of marijuana and controlled prescription drugs may be inching up.

The overall decline in substance use rates also may obfuscate dangerous patterns of substance use; for example, high school students drink more drinks when they drink (4.9 drinks per day) than any other age group, including 18-25 year olds (4.4 drinks per day).

While most teens responding to CASA's survey of high school students conducted for this study report that they believe substance use to be very dangerous, almost half of them are current users. Further, a quarter of them (24.7 percent) see marijuana as a harmless drug and 16.9 percent think of it as a medicine. Teens who hold favorable views of the benefits of substance use—such as being cool or popular, weight control, self-medication, stress relief or coping—are more likely to smoke, drink and use other drugs than those who hold less favorable beliefs or stronger perceptions of risk.

**The High Risk of Addiction**

One in eight high school students (11.9 percent, 1.6 million) have a diagnosable clinical substance use disorder involving nicotine, alcohol or other drugs. Because the adolescent brain is more sensitive to the addictive properties of nicotine, alcohol and other drugs, the younger a person is when he or she begins to use addictive substances, the greater the risk of developing the disease of addiction.

Every year that the onset of substance use is delayed until the mid-20s—about the time when the human brain is more fully developed—the risk of developing a substance use disorder is reduced. One in four people who used any addictive substance before they turned 18 have a substance use disorder, compared with one in 25 who first used any of these substances at age 21 or older.

**Substance Use Affects Safety, and Health, and Academic Performance**

Teen substance use contributes to some of the most glaring barriers to health and productivity facing the current generation of teenagers in the United States. For example:

- Teen tobacco, alcohol and marijuana users are at least twice as likely as nonusers to have poor grades and teen marijuana users are approximately twice as likely as nonusers to drop out of high school.
- In 2009, one in 10 (9.7 percent) high school students reported driving after drinking alcohol in the past month.
- More than one in five (21.6 percent) sexually-active high school students report having used alcohol or other drugs before their last sexual experience; one in five teens and young adults report having unprotected sex after drinking or using other drugs.
- In 2009, 32.0 percent of all substance-related reports in emergency department visits made by patients ages 12 to 17 were alcohol related and 18.7 percent were marijuana related.
- Substance use is a major contributor to the three leading causes of death among adolescents—accidents, homicides and suicides—and increases the risk of numerous potentially fatal health conditions, including cancers, heart disease and respiratory illnesses.
- Smoking is related to impaired lung growth, asthma-related symptoms and declines in lung function in adolescence; regular cigarette smoking increases the risk of lung cancer, breast cancer, emphysema, bronchial disorders and cardiovascular diseases.
• Alcohol-induced damage has been observed in the brains of binge-drinking teens. Teens with alcohol use disorders have more self-reported health problems (including problems with sleep, eating, and vision) and more abnormalities during physical examinations (including in the abdominal region as well as in their respiratory and cardiovascular systems) than those without alcohol use disorders.

• Heavy or chronic marijuana use is associated with a host of cognitive impairments and with structural and functional brain changes. Regular use of marijuana can hike the risk of respiratory illnesses including chronic cough, bronchitis, and lung infections.

Even relatively low levels of substance use can have disastrous consequences for teens, including accidents, violence, unsafe sexual activity, cardiac and respiratory problems, and even death.

The consequences of adolescent substance use extend to all teens, even those who are not using. A significant proportion of high school students reports knowing someone personally who has gotten into trouble with parents, their school or the authorities (41.0 percent); who has gotten into an accident (26.8 percent); whose ability to perform school or work activities has been disturbed (24.5 percent); who has been injured or harassed (19.4 percent each); who has had an unintended pregnancy (13.8 percent); who has experienced physical abuse (11.1 percent); and who has been sexually assaulted or raped (7.0 percent) due to someone else's substance use.

US Culture Drives Teen Substance Use

Strong parental disapproval of substance use can help offset cultural messages promoting substance use, but too many parents by their own attitudes or behaviors further increase the chances that their teens will use:

• Nearly half (46.1 percent) of children under age 18 (34.4 million) live in a household where someone age 18 or older engages in risky substance use; 45.4 percent (33.9 million) live with a parent who is a risky substance user.

• More than one in six (17.8 percent) children under age 18 (13.3 million) live in a household where someone age 18 or older has a substance use disorder; 16.9 percent (12.6 million) live with a parent who has the disorder.

• Less than half (42.6 percent) of parents list refraining from smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, using marijuana, misusing prescription drugs or using other illicit drugs as one of their top three concerns for their teens, and 20.8 percent characterize marijuana as a harmless drug.

Source: Gale Opposing Viewpoints Center

Teenagers risk kidney failure in drug craze

Ketamine causes irreversible damage, fear GPs

Diane Taylor and Denis Campbell
The Observer, Saturday 21 November 2009

Ketamine, a powerful tranquilliser used on horses, is being taken in growing number by young people in the UK, causing crippling health problems.

Some addicts have needed to have their bladders removed and must now wear catheters. Other users have suffered serious kidney problems, breathing difficulties, addiction, bouts of unconsciousness and trouble with urinating. The drug also involves a heightened risk of heart attack.

Some users also end up with cocaine-style damage to the inside of their nose, because the drug is often snorted in powder form, though it can also be injected, taken as a pill or swallowed as a liquid.

Experts say ketamine is increasing in popularity partly because it is cheaper than cocaine and, as the purity of cocaine falls, gives a more reliable high. It usually sells for about half the price of cocaine, at about £20 per gram, but can be obtained for as little as £5 a gram. "The quality of heroin and cocaine is so poor that people are turning to ketamine, which is cheap and available," said Dr Chris Ford, a GP and the clinical lead for substance misuse management in general practice in the London borough of Brent.

Dr Angela Cottrell, a urologist attached to the Bristol Urological Institute at the city's Southmead Hospital, has studied the health problems caused by ketamine. She saw her first patient with severe bladder problems in mid-2007 and has
seen a growing number of cases since. "About one-third of ketamine users develop severe problems with the drug. There's something about the way that it's metabolised that is causing these problems," said Cottrell.

"One of the most alarming things is that the long-term effects on the body are not known. We don't know if things get better over time or whether people will develop kidney failure in the long-term." The damage to vital organs may be irreversible, Cottrell warned.

Ketamine is both a stimulant and an hallucinogenic. In 2007, Professor David Nutt, recently sacked as the chairman of the government's drugs advisory panel, published research in The Lancet which ranked ketamine as the sixth most harmful substance out of 20 studied. It came behind heroin, cocaine, barbituates, street methadone and alcohol, but ahead of cannabis and ecstasy, in 11th and 18th places. The drug is known as K, Special K and, because of the youth of many users, "kiddie smack". The Addaction specialist drugs service in Lincoln sees about 200 children under 18 every year. In 2007, none said they used ketamine. Between June and November 2008, one teenager said it was their main drug and six said it was their secondary choice, usually behind alcohol or cannabis. But in the same period this year, four 15- to 18-year-olds said it was their preferred way of getting high, and 15 as their next most favourite.

Elliot Elam, of Addaction, said: "It's not an epidemic, but it is an emerging trend. There's a new generation for whom ketamine use is acceptable."

According to the British Crime Survey, only 1.8% of people in England and Wales have ever used ketamine, but that figure is doubled among 16- to 24-year-olds. It estimated that 113,000 people used it at least once in 2007-08. Research published last week in the journal Addiction blamed the drug for memory loss and mild delusions.

A "normal" dose of ketamine is 60mg to 100mg, but some users are taking 5g or 10g a day. Twenty-three people are believed to have died between 1993 and 2006 after walking into traffic and risking other dangers after losing their sense of reality.

Source: The Guardian UK

Why Weed Makes You Lazy
Source: Discovery News

The War on Drugs is a Failure
Source: New York Times
Source: Discovery News

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http://static.ddmcdn.com/gif/blogs/Medical-Uses-Drugs.png)