

Healthy Living Newsletter

DECEMBER 2010

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 12



Health & Wellness Events

Corporate Blood Drive

- December 2
- 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Training Room 4

Corporate Blood Drive

- December 20
- 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Training Room 4

Marijuana Overview

The main active chemical in marijuana is THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol). Short-term effects of marijuana use include problems with memory and learning, distorted perception, difficulty in thinking and problem solving, loss of coordination, increased heart rate, and anxiety.

Health effects

Regular marijuana smokers may have many of the same respiratory problems that tobacco smokers do, such as daily cough and phlegm production, more frequent acute chest illnesses, a heightened risk of lung infections, and a greater tendency toward obstructed airways.

Marijuana has a potential to promote cancer of the lungs and other parts of the respiratory tract because marijuana smoke contains 50 to 70 percent more carcinogenic hydrocarbons than tobacco smoke.

Marijuana's damage to short-term memory occurs because THC alters the way in which information is processed by the hippocampus, the section of the brain responsible for memory formation.

Source: www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov

Substance Abuse

Definition

Substance abuse is the overindulgence in and dependence on a drug or other chemical leading to effects that are detrimental to the individual's physical and mental health, or the welfare of others.

The disorder is characterized by a pattern of continued pathological use of a medication, non-medically indicated drug, or toxin that results in repeated adverse social consequences. These consequences include failure to meet work, family, or school obligations; interpersonal conflicts; or legal problems.

Substance abuse statistics

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are 76.3 million persons with alcohol use disorders worldwide.
- A single joint contains four times as much cancer-causing tar as a filtered cigarette.
- A study showed that 29 percent of people ages 12 to 20 have had a drink in the past month.
- Club drugs, such as GHB and Rohypnol, are used in "date rape" and other assaults.
- Cocaine use can cause heart attacks, seizures, strokes, and respiratory failure.

Source: *UPS RoadMap to Health*

Inhalant Abuse

Definition

Inhalants are classified under the following categories:

- **Volatile solvents.** Liquids that vaporize at room temperature.
- **Aerosols.** Sprays that contain propellants and solvents.
- **Gases.** These include medical anesthetics as well as gases used in household or commercial products.
- **Nitrites.** Unlike most other inhalants, which act directly on the central nervous system, nitrites act primarily to dilute blood vessels and relax muscles.

Abuse

Inhalants can be breathed in through the nose or the mouth in a variety of ways, including the following:

- "Sniffing" or "snorting" fumes by spraying aerosols directly into the nose or mouth
- "Bagging" (sniffing or inhaling) fumes from substances sprayed or deposited inside a plastic or paper bag
- "Huffing" from an inhalant-soaked rag stuffed in the mouth; or inhaling from balloons filled with nitrous oxide

Inhaled chemicals are absorbed rapidly into the bloodstream through the lungs and quickly distributed to the brain and other organs. Within seconds of inhalation, the user experiences intoxication along with other effects similar to those produced by alcohol. These may include slurred speech, inability to coordinate movements, euphoria, and dizziness. In addition, users may experience lightheadedness, hallucinations and delusions.

Because intoxication lasts only a few minutes, abusers frequently seek to prolong the high by continuing to inhale repeatedly over the course of several hours. With successive inhalations, abusers can suffer a loss of consciousness and possibly even death.

Source: www.nida.nih.gov



Important Facts About Alcohol

Although many kids believe that they already know everything about alcohol, myths and misinformation abound. Here are some important facts to share when discussing alcohol and underage drinking:

- Alcohol is a powerful drug that slows down the body and mind. It impairs coordination; slows reaction time; and impairs vision, clear thinking, and judgment.
- Many factors affect a person's reaction to alcohol, including body weight, metabolism, gender, and body chemistry.
- Beer and wine are not "safer" drinks than hard liquor. A 12-ounce can of beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine, and 1.5 ounces of hard liquor all contain the same amount of alcohol and have the same effects on the body and mind.
- On average, it takes two to three hours for a single drink to leave a person's system. Nothing can speed up the process, such as drinking a cup of coffee, taking a cold shower, or "walking it off."
- People tend to be very bad at judging how seriously alcohol has affected them. This means many individuals who drive after drinking think they can control a car – but actually can not.
- **Anyone** can develop a serious alcohol problem, including teenagers.

Source: www.pubs.niaaa.nih.gov and www.alcoholism.about.com

To learn whether you or someone you love has a problem with alcohol, or to get help, visit the Alcoholics Anonymous Web site at

www.aa.org

Alcoholism

Definition

Alcoholism, also known as alcohol dependence, is defined as a chronic disease, mainly affecting the nervous and digestive systems, and caused by the excessive and habitual consumption of alcohol.

Symptoms

- **Craving.** A strong need, or urge, to drink
- **Impaired control.** Not being able to stop drinking once drinking has begun
- **Physical dependence.** Experiencing withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety, when alcohol is stopped after a period of heavy drinking
- **Tolerance.** The need for increasing amounts of alcohol to feel its effects

The craving an alcoholic feels for alcohol can be as strong as the need for food or water. An alcoholic will continue to drink despite serious family, health, or legal problems.

Like many diseases, alcoholism is a chronic disease, meaning that it continues throughout a person's lifetime. It usually follows a predictable course and has various symptoms. The risk for developing alcoholism is influenced by both a person's genes and his or her lifestyle. However, that doesn't mean an alcoholic has no control over the disease. The first step is asking for help.

When an alcoholic is unwilling to get help

What can you do about it? This can be a challenge. An alcoholic can't be forced to get help except under certain circumstances, such as a traffic violation or arrest that results in court-ordered treatment. However, you do not have to wait for someone to "hit rock bottom" before you act. Many alcoholism treatment specialists suggest the following steps.

- **Stop all "coverups."** Family members often make excuses to others or try to protect the alcoholic from the results of his or her drinking. It is important to stop covering for the alcoholic so that he or she experiences the full consequences of drinking.
- **Time your intervention.** The best time to talk to the drinker is shortly after an alcohol-related problem has occurred, such as a serious family argument or an accident. Choose a time when he or she is sober, both of you are fairly calm, and you have a chance to talk in private.
- **Be specific.** Tell the family member that you are worried about his or her drinking. Use examples of the ways in which the drinking has caused problems, including the most recent incident.
- **State the results.** Explain to the drinker what you will do if he or she does not get help—not to punish the drinker, but to protect yourself from his or her problems. What you say may range from refusing to go with the person to any social activity where alcohol is being served, to moving out of the house. Do not make any promises that you are not prepared to carry out.
- **Get help.** Gather information in advance about treatment options in your community. If the person is willing to get help, call immediately for an appointment with a treatment counselor. Offer to go with the family member on the first visit to a treatment program and/or an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.
- **Call on a friend.** If the family member still refuses to get help, ask a friend to talk with him or her. A friend who is a recovering alcoholic may be particularly persuasive, but any person who is caring and non-judgmental may help
- **Get support.** It is important to remember that you are not alone. Support groups are available in most communities.

Source: www.niaaa.nih.gov and alcoholism.about.com