

Healthy Living Newsletter

Take Control of Your Health, Your Benefits, and Your Future Wellness / December 2011

Underage Drinking

What is “a drink” anyway?

A standard drink is any drink that contains about 14 grams of pure alcohol (about 0.6 fluid ounces, or 1.2 tablespoons).

There are many reasons why children start drinking:

- **Stress**—When children worry about things such as grades, fitting in, and physical appearance, they may use alcohol as a way to escape their problems. Encourage your child to get involved in sports or other extracurricular activities as a healthier way to cope.
- **More Freedom**—As children begin spending more time with their peers and less time with their parents, this increased freedom can lead to drinking. While it is important to give your child space, keep track of where they are and who they are with.
- **Curiosity**—Taking chances and trying new things is a normal part of growing up. For some children, this exploration includes experimenting with alcohol. Remind your child about the real risks of underage drinking, and make sure he or she knows how you feel about underage drinking.



- **Peer Pressure**—Most children feel pressure to be popular and fit in. Many try alcohol when they are in a social setting where “everyone else is doing it.” Help boost your child’s confidence by helping them learn different ways to say “no”, and remind them that real friends would not pressure them to drink.
- **Transitions**—Life events, such as moving from middle school to high school, breaking up with a significant other, moving to a new home, or divorce, can cause a child to turn to alcohol.
- **Environment**—If children grow up in an environment where adults drink excessively, they are more likely to drink themselves.
- **Genetics**—Children who come from a family with a history of alcoholism are at an increased risk for alcohol dependence.
- **Personality**—Disruptive, depressed or hyperactive children are at a higher risk of having alcohol problems

Consequences of Underage Drinking

- School problems, such as more absences and poor or failing grades
- Social problems, such as fighting and lack of participation in youth activities
- Physical problems, such as hangovers or illness
- Higher risk of suicide and homicide
- Alcohol-related car crashes and other unintentional injuries, such as burns, falls and drowning
- Memory problems
- Abuse of other drugs
- Legal problems, such as arrest for drinking or physically hurting someone while drunk
- Unwanted, unplanned, and unprotected sexual activity
- Physical and sexual development problems

Sources: www.cdc.gov, www.niaaa.nih.gov & www.ncadi.samhsa.gov

Value Options

Your employee assistance program (EAP) can be accessed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for resources, referrals and counseling services.

Toll Free: (800) 336-9117

TTY: (866) 787-1880

www.achievesolutions.net/UPS

Crystal Meth

What is crystal meth?

An illicit form of methamphetamine, it is a powerful, addictive, man-made stimulant. It can lead to severe physiological and psychological dependence.

What does it look like?

It forms into clear crystal chunks, similar in appearance to ice or glass. Crystal meth is odorless and colorless.

How is it used?

It is usually smoked, but is sometimes snorted or injected. The drug is abused because of its euphoric effect.

What are the effects?

The short-term effects are similar to those of cocaine but longer lasting. Crystal meth can cause erratic and violent behavior among its users. Effects include suppressed appetite,

interference with sleeping behavior, mood swings, unpredictability, tremors, convulsions, increased blood pressure, and irregular heart rate. Users may also experience homicidal or suicidal thoughts.

Long-term effects can include brain damage, coma, stroke, or death.

Source: www.drugfree.org

Substance Abuse

Examples of Drugs That Teens Abuse

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Prescribed medications (such as Ritalin, Adderall, and OxyContin)
- Inhalants
- Over-the-counter cough, cold, sleep, and diet medications
- Marijuana
- Club drugs: MDMA (Ecstasy), GHB, Rohypnol (Rohies), Ketamine, Methamphetamine, and LSD
- Depressants
- Heroin
- Steroids



- Loss of interest in past activities
- Withdrawal from responsibilities resulting in excuses
- Deterioration in physical appearance and grooming
- Reluctance to wear short sleeved shirts during appropriate weather (to hide needle marks)
- Stealing from work
- Wearing of sunglasses at inappropriate times
- Unusual borrowing of money from family, friends, and co-workers
- Secretive behavior, sneaking, hiding, frequent trips to the bathroom
- Use of mouthwash or breath mints to cover up the smell of alcohol
- Use of incense, room deodorant, or perfume to hide smoke or chemical odors
- Bottles of eye drops, which may be used to mask bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils

Warning Signs of Substance Abuse

- Sudden changes in work attendance and quality of work
- Increased irritability and/or general attitude changes

Source: *UPS Road Map to Health*

Marijuana

Short-term effects:

- Problems with memory and learning
- Distorted perception (sights, sounds, time, touch)
- Trouble with problem solving
- Loss of motor coordination

Long-term effects:

- **Cancer**
It is known that marijuana smoke contains some of the same cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco smoke.
- **Lungs and airways**
People who smoke marijuana often develop the same problems that cigarette smokers have, including coughing and wheezing, more chest colds, and a greater risk of getting lung infections like pneumonia.
- **Immune system**
Animal and human studies have shown that marijuana impairs the T-cells in the lung's immune system to fight off infections.

Source: www.nida.nih.gov

Holiday Stress

The holidays may be a time of joy, but they are not always a time of peace. Balancing your family's expectations with work commitments and social obligations can make this the most stressful time of the year. Before the season gets too busy, try these strategies for reducing holiday stress in the workplace.

Plan: Create a calendar for the holiday, noting who will be at work.

Prioritize: What absolutely has to be done today and what can wait until after the holidays?

Keep it simple: Lower your stress level by simplifying your holiday plans.

Take care of yourself

Breathe



Source: UPS Road Map to Health

Inhalant Abuse

Inhalants are volatile substances that produce chemical vapors that can be inhaled to induce a psychoactive, or mind-altering effect. Today more than 1,000 different products are commonly abused.

Many young people say they begin sniffing when they are in grade school. They start because they feel these substances can't hurt them, because of peer pressure, or because of low self-esteem.

Inhalants are classified under four general categories:

Volatile solvents are liquids that vaporize at room temperature. These include paint thinners and removers, dry-cleaning fluids, degreasers, gasoline, glues, and correction fluids.

Aerosols are sprays that contain propellants and solvents. They include spray paints, deodorant and hair sprays, vegetable oil sprays



for cooking, and fabric protector sprays.

Gases include medical anesthetics as well as gases used in household and commercial products.

Nitrates often are considered a special class of inhalants. Unlike most other inhalants, which act directly on the central nervous system, nitrates act primarily to dilute blood vessels and relax the muscles.

What is the typical profile of an inhalant abuser in the U.S.?

There is no typical profile of an inhalant abuser. Victims represent both sexes and all socio-economic groups in the U.S.

How can you tell if a young person is an inhalant abuser?

- Unusual breath odor or chemical odor on clothing
- Slurred or disoriented speech
- Drunk, dazed, or dizzy appearance
- Signs of paint or other products where they would not normally be, such as on the face or fingers
- Red or runny eyes or nose
- Nausea and/or loss of appetite
- In chronic inhalant abusers, such symptoms such as anxiety, excitability, irritability, or restlessness

How are inhalants used?

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

sniffing or **snorting** fumes from containers; **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; **inhaling** from balloons filled with nitrous oxide.

Adverse Effects That Inhalants Have on Health

Sudden Sniffing Death can result from a single session of inhalant use by an otherwise healthy young person.

Sudden sniffing death is particularly associated with the abuse of butane, propane and chemicals in aerosols.

Hearing Loss

Limb Spasms

Central Nervous System Damage

Bone Marrow Damage

Liver and Kidney Damage

Blood Oxygen Depletion

Source: www.nida.nih.gov & www.drugabuse.gov

Laying Down the Rules with Children on Alcohol and Drugs



Parents are the first line of defense when it comes to your child's drug use or drinking. Nearly two-thirds of teenagers see great risk in upsetting their parents or losing the respect of family and friends if they smoke marijuana or use other drugs. There are some simple steps you can take to keep track of your

child's activities.

- **Set rules.** Let your teen know that drug and underage alcohol use is unacceptable and that these rules are set to keep him or her safe. Set limits with clear consequences for breaking them.
- **Praise and reward good behavior for compliance and enforce consequences for non-compliance.**
- **Know where your teen is and what he or she will be doing during unsupervised time.** Research shows that teens with unsupervised time are three times more likely than other teens to use marijuana or other drugs. Unsupervised teens are also more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as underage drinking, sexual activity, and cigarette smoking.
- **Talk to your teen.**
- **Keep them busy,** especially between 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and into the evening hours. Engage your teen in after-school activities. Enroll your child in a supervised educational program or sports league. Research shows that teens who are involved in constructive, adult-supervised activities are less likely to use drugs than other teens.
- **Check on your teenager.** Occasionally check in to see that your kids are where they say they are going to be and that they are spending time with whom they say they are with.
- **Establish a "core values statement" for your family.** Consider developing a family mission statement that reflects your family's core values. This might be discussed and created during a family meeting or over a weekend meal together. Talking about what they stand for is particularly important at a time when teens are pressured daily by external influencers on issues like drugs, sex, violence, or vandalism. If there is no compass to guide your kids, the void will be filled by the strongest force.
- **Spend time together as a family regularly and be involved in your kid's lives.**

- **Take time to learn the facts about marijuana and underage drinking and talk to your teen about them.**
- **Get to know your teen's friends (and their parents).**
- **Stay in touch with the adult supervisors of your child**

Source: UPS Road Map to Health

Underage Drinking Myths

Myth: Cracking down on underage drinking will only make youth want to drink more.

Reality: Even though we tend to think of young people as naturally rebellious, research shows that the majority of them respond best to clear rules—both from parents and society at large.

Myth: Alcohol is safer than other drugs.

Reality: Alcohol kills 6.5 times more youth than all other illegal drugs combined.

Myth: Drinking is okay as long as they do not drive. Most alcohol-related deaths are from drinking and driving.

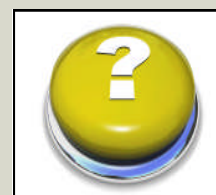
Reality: Only one-third of underage drinking deaths involve auto crashes. The remaining two-thirds involve alcohol poisoning, homicides, suicides, and unintentional injuries such as burns, drowning and falls.

Source: UPS Road Map to Health

Questions?

If you have any questions or topics that you would like to see covered in this newsletter, e-mail your suggestions to:

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Sneak Peek

The theme of the January, 2012 issue of the newsletter will be **The Five Being Habits.**

