

# SUBSTANCE USE

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SUBSTANCE USE IN  
PRE-TEENS AND TEENS

# WHAT IS PRE-TEEN/TEEN SUBSTANCE USE AND WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

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- ❖ Use of any addictive substances—tobacco/nicotine, alcohol and other drugs—during pre-teen/teen years
- ❖ During adolescence, drug use can interfere with brain development, reduce academic performance and increases the risk of accidents, homicides, suicides, mental health diagnosis and other serious health conditions, including addiction
- ❖ Teens and young adults are more inclined than adults to take risks, including smoking, drinking or using other drugs
- ❖ Use of any addictive substance while the brain is still developing increases the chances of future use of addictive substances

# PRE-TEEN/TEEN SUBSTANCE USE EXPERIMENTATION

- ◆ Half of all new drug users are under the age of 18
- ◆ Experimentation plays the biggest role in teenage drug use
- ◆ Experimentation is a normal stage in adolescent development (this does not mean that if an adolescent has experimented with drugs or alcohol that they will become an addict, it just increases the possibility of addiction)
- ◆ It's important to understand why some pre-teens/teens are tempted to experiment
- ◆ Common reasons pre-teens/teens begin to abuse substances include:
  - Curiosity
  - Peer pressure/social media
  - Stress
  - Emotional struggles
  - A desire to escape
  - History of a traumatic experience
  - Role models are modeling use of substances

# WARNING SIGNS OF PRE-TEEN/TEEN SUBSTANCE USE

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- ❖ There are many signs to watch for to help identify that a pre-teen/teen is using drugs
- ❖ It can be difficult to tell the difference between the signs of adolescence and actual drug use, but parents can be proactive in talking to their pre-teen/teen to find out what's going on
- ❖ Certain symptoms and behaviors are warning signs for substance use in pre-teens/teens, however they may also indicate other problems, such as depression, so be sure to talk with a professional to rule out questions or concerns if in doubt
- ❖ Knowing your pre-teen/teen's normal behaviors, routines and personality can assist with having a baseline to go by

# WARNING SIGNS OF PRE-TEEN/TEEN SUBSTANCE USE (CONTINUED)

**Some common signs of drug abuse include:**

- ❖ School problems such as declining or failing grades, poor attendance or discipline problems
- ❖ Changes in choice of friends
- ❖ Bloodshot eyes, glassy eyes, or change in pupil size
- ❖ Laughing for no reason
- ❖ Loss of interest in activities
- ❖ Poor hygiene or diminished personal appearance
- ❖ Avoiding eye contact or avoidant behaviors
- ❖ Sudden change in appetite or change in weight (loss or gain)
- ❖ Smell of smoke on breath or clothes
- ❖ Depressed mood/talking about depression or talking about suicide/attempts at suicide
- ❖ Unusual tiredness or change in sleeping patterns (up all night or sleeping all day)
- ❖ Missing curfew, secretive behavior, delinquent behavior or running away from home

# TYPES OF SUBSTANCES

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**Here are a few substances that can be used:**

Alcohol

Bath Salts

Benzodiazepine

Club Drugs

Cocaine

Hallucinogens

Heroin

Inhalants

Marijuana

Methamphetamine

Opioids

Tobacco

Vaping

# ALCOHOL

**What is it:** There are different kinds of alcohol. Ethyl alcohol (ethanol), the only alcohol used in beverages, is produced by the fermentation of grains and fruits. Fermenting is a chemical process whereby yeast acts upon certain ingredients in the food, creating alcohol.

**Alcohol slang terms include:** juice, sauce, hooch and liquid courage

**Signs of Use and Effects of the substance:** The smell of alcohol on the breath, bloodshot eyes, slow or slurred speech, fatigue, deteriorating physical hygiene and grooming, poor body coordination, vomiting or nausea. Drinking is more harmful to teens than adults because their brains are still developing throughout adolescence and well into young adulthood. Drinking during this critical growth period can lead to lifelong damage in brain function, particularly as it relates to memory, motor skills (ability to move) and coordination.

**Risk factors for alcoholism include:** genetics, underage drinking, mental health, and motivations for drinking.

# BATH SALTS

**What is it:** Synthetic cathinones, more commonly known as "bath salts," are human-made stimulants chemically related to cathinone, a substance found in the khat plant. They usually take the form of a white or brown crystal-like powder and are sold in small plastic or foil packages labeled "not for human consumption." They can be labeled as "bath salts," "plant food," "jewelry cleaner," or "phone screen cleaner."

**Street Names:** Bloom, Cloud Nine, Cosmic Blast, Flakka, Ivory Wave, Lunar Wave, Scarface, Sky

**Signs of Use and Effects of the substance:** nasal damage (bloody nose or runny nose), periods of extreme energy, euphoria, and hyperactivity followed by periods of lethargy and low mood, signs of being tense, such as displaying frequent jaw clenching or teeth grinding, becoming extremely aggressive and even hostile and periods of psychosis. Possible side effects and complications of even low doses of bath salt abuse include: rapid heart rate, chest pain, high blood pressure, feeling jittery or agitated, having hallucinations, paranoia or delirium. The agitation and delirium can last for days. Other possible effects on the body from using these drugs, particularly with overdose, include: liver failure, seizures, heart attack, brain swelling, and severe fever (hyperthermia).



# BENZODIAZEPINE

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**What is it:** Benzodiazepines are a type of medication known as tranquilizers. Familiar names include Valium and Xanax. These medications can be used to treat anxiety, seizure disorders, sleep disorders and dental concerns. When people without prescriptions obtain and take these drugs for their sedating effects, use turns into abuse.

**Street Names:** bars, benzos, blues, candy, chill pills, french fries, downers, planks, sleeping pills, totem poles, tranks, zanies, and z-bar

**Signs of Use and Effects of the substance:** Physical weakness, slurred speech, confusion, poor decision-making/judgment abilities, blurred vision, lack of motor coordination, dizziness, drowsiness, coma, difficulty breathing, death (fatal overdose may occur when a benzodiazepine is mixed with alcohol.) Ironically, chronic abuse of benzos can produce many of the same symptoms that they are prescribed for including anxiety and insomnia. Safe withdrawal from benzos requires the supervision of trained medical professionals vs stopping the intake of this medication on your own. Risks of tolerance, psychological and physical dependence occur as well.

# CLUB DRUGS

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**What is it:** Many club drugs are hallucinogens, which can cause visual and auditory disturbances. This substance is commonly taken at raves and dance parties. Many of them are synthesized specifically as energy boosters for party environments. Many club drugs are also called designer drugs, referring to the fact that many of the drugs are man made rather than found in or derived from nature.

**Types of club drugs:** MDMA (Ecstasy), LSD (Acid), Rohypnol (roofies), Gamma-Hydroxybutyrate Acid (GHB), Ketamine (Special K), Methamphetamine (Speed)

**Signs of Use and Effects of the substance:** hallucinations, behavior change, memory loss, increased senses, poor judgement, muscle cramps, teeth clenching (has possession of a baby pacifier and may wear this as a necklace or other items to stimulate the mouth such as sucking on suckers), increased alertness and confidence, euphoria where users are compelled to trust and touch everyone they meet, notorious for being rape drugs, feel as if they have superpowers, overheating of the body is also a concern, and sedative qualities can slow breathing to the point of death.

# COCAINE

**What is it:** Cocaine is a highly addictive drug that ups your levels of alertness, attention, and energy. It's made from the coca plant, which is native to South America.

**Street Names:** Coke, Snow, Rock, Blow, Crack

**Signs of Use:** Talkativeness, nervousness, high activity levels, decreased appetite, dilated pupils, argumentative behavior, paranoia, runny nose, or excessive sniffing and other indicators of cocaine use include finding items like, rolled up bills and razor blades, finding cocaine residue around the house, or finding them being very secretive around how they're using their money.

**Effects of the substance:** Cocaine changes the way the neurotransmitters communicate across your brain. It primarily targets the dopamine receptor, which releases pleasurable feelings throughout your body. When you're an adolescent new connections are being made in the brain, so it's a dangerous time to be experimenting. It also increases the likelihood the teen will act in a more impulsive and risky manner in the future.

# HALLUCINOGENS

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**What is it:** There are two classes or types of hallucinogens — natural hallucinogens and synthetic hallucinogens. Natural hallucinogens come from natural sources, such as plants. While, synthetic hallucinogens are more chemically complex because of their construction in drug laboratories.

**Signs of Use and Effects of the substance:** Hallucinogenic drugs affect a user's sensory perception and sensory interpretation and a typical user can see, hear and feel things that aren't there. These experiences are called hallucinations or imaginary sensations or images that seem real to the user. Users may also present with behavior change, memory loss, increased senses and poor judgement. Many teens consider hallucinations to be fun or an enhancement of a party experience, but hallucinogens can take a frightening turn, resembling nightmares or causing paranoia.

**Street Names:** Popular natural hallucinogens include: Peyote, magic mushrooms, DMT or dimethyltryptamine and Ayahuasca. Popular synthetic hallucinogens include: LSD, or d-lysergic acid diethylamide and PCP, or phencyclidine

# HEROIN

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**What is it:** Heroin is an opioid drug made from morphine, a natural substance taken from the seed pod of the various opium poppy plants. Heroin can be a white or brown powder, or a black sticky substance known as black tar heroin. People inject, sniff, snort, or smoke heroin.

**Signs of Use and Effects of the substance:** dry mouth, nausea/vomiting, severe itching, clouded mental functioning, going "on the nod" (a back-and-forth state of being conscious and semi-conscious), bruising or track marks at the injection sites, wearing long sleeved shirts (esp. in the summer months) and nasal issues. Watch for possession of needles or syringes, spoons, aluminum foil, straws, or gum wrappers that have burn marks on them, missing shoelaces, hoodie ties, or strings that may have been used to tie off their arm, small plastic bags with a powder residue and pipes. Between hits of heroin, users might go through cycles of withdrawal, so they may experience flu-like symptoms, such as abdominal discomfort and sweating. There is a risk of death from accidental drug overdose. This substance is highly addictive.

**Street Names:** *big H, horse, hell dust, dope and smack*

# INHALANTS

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**What is it:** Inhalants are volatile substances that produce chemical vapors that can be inhaled to induce a psychoactive, or mind-altering, effect. Although other abused substances can be inhaled, the term "inhalants" is used to describe a variety of substances whose main common characteristic is that they are rarely, if ever, taken by any route other than inhalation.

**Signs of Use and Effects of the substance:** Drowsiness, mood swings, personality changes, slurred speech, unusual brief bouts of euphoria, in addition to chemical odors on breath/clothing, paint or other stains on body/clothes, hidden empty spray paint/solvent containers, chemical-soaked rags/clothing, drunk/disoriented appearance, nausea/loss of appetite, inattentiveness, lack of coordination and depression. Other risks include permanent brain damage, permanent loss of coordination, organ damage to liver and kidneys, hearing loss, bone marrow loss and death.

**Some examples of inhalants include:** Vegetable oil spray, nail polish, gasoline, glue, spray paint, markers, cleaning fluids, electronic contact cleaner, spray aerosols (deodorant, hairspray, computer duster spray), nitrous oxide or "whippets", shoe polish, or lighter fluid

# MARIJUANA

**What is it:** Marijuana comes from the hemp plant, *Cannabis sativa*. It contains many chemicals, called cannabinoids, including the psychoactive THC (tetrahydrocannabinol). THC is the substance most responsible for the effects or "high" users experience after use. Weed dabs, a type of marijuana concentrate, is an extracted form of dry herb which you can smoke or vaporize.

**Signs of Use and Effects of the substance:** bloodshot eyes, presents very giddy/very tired (depending on last use), presents paranoid/anxious and may get the "munchies" and be hungry for anything they can get their hands on, have possession of pipes, rolling papers, baggies, vape pens and any form of THC. The teen brain is actively developing and often will not be fully developed until the mid 20s. THC use during this period may harm the developing teen brain. Negative effects include: difficulty thinking and problem solving, problems with memory and learning, impaired coordination and difficulty maintaining attention.

**Street Names and how it is used:** Referred to as Weed, Pot, Bud, Grass, Herb, Mary Jane, Dab, Budder, Shatter, Earwax and Honeycomb. It can be smoked or made into an edible. Users smoke as joints, blunts, through pipes (called bowls), water pipes (called bong), or vaporizer devices.

# METHAMPHETAMINES

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**What is it:** Meth is a stimulant that increases energy, alertness, and feelings of pleasure. The full chemical name is methamphetamine. Meth can be smoked, snorted, inhaled or injected. It can be dissolved in liquid and taken orally. Pure meth has an off-white crystalline appearance and is crushed into a fine white powder.

**Signs of Use and Effects of the substance:** Body odor like ammonia, burn marks on fingers and mouth, dilated pupils, high body temperature, mood swings, paranoia, tooth decay, trouble sleeping and weight loss. Also possession of drug paraphernalia like pipes, razor blades, straws, empty capsules or scales. Side effects include rapid breathing, an irregular heart rate, and increased blood pressure. Users also complain of sweating, headache, blurred vision, dry mouth, hot flashes and dizziness. Meth mouth is another risk (severe tooth decay and gum disease often causes teeth to break or fall out). Long-term use can bring on brain damage that causes problems with memory and body movements, and can cause mood swings and violent behavior.

**Street Names:** Crank, Crystal, Ice, Speed, Poor Man's Coke or Redneck Cocaine, Trash or Garbage



# OPIOIDS

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**What is it:** A class of drugs naturally found in the opium poppy plant. They work in the brain to produce a variety of effects, including the relief of pain. Opioids are sometimes referred to as narcotics. The most commonly used opioids are: prescription opioids (OxyContin and Vicodin), fentanyl, (a synthetic opioid 50-100 times more potent than morphine) and heroin (an illegal drug).

**Signs of Use and Effects of the substance:** Physical signs include, severe drowsiness, constipation, changes in sleeping habits, nausea, confusion, constricted pupils and going "on the nod" (a back-and-forth state of being conscious and semi-conscious). Psychological signs include, anxiety, depression, irritability, lowered motivation, euphoria and mood changes. Between uses of opioids, users may go through cycles of withdrawal, where they may experience flu-like symptoms, such as abdominal discomfort and sweating. There is a risk of death from accidental drug overdose. Over time, opioids can lead to insomnia, muscle pain, heart infections, pneumonia, and addiction.

**Street Names:** oxy 80, percs, china girl, monkey, demmies, hydro, vic, footballs, cotton, balloons

# TOBACCO

**What is it:** Nicotine is the active ingredient in tobacco leaves. Nicotine is a stimulant with addictive properties. When someone uses nicotine, they feel the drive to use it again. Nicotine is found in tobacco leaves but can be isolated and put into other products like e-cigarettes and vapes.

**Signs of Use:** smell of smoke on person/belongings, burn holes in clothing, increase in use of breath fresheners, open windows in bedroom, excuses to go outside, sores in mouth, gum recession around the front lower teeth, red or swollen gums as well as possession of tobacco products or lighters

**Tobacco products include:** Chewing tobacco, Cigarettes, Cigars, Vapes, Hookah, Nicotine gum, Nicotine patches and Snuff

**Effects of the substance:** Initial effects (dizziness or trouble balancing, heavy breathing, faster heartbeat, headache, high blood pressure, mouthwatering, nausea/vomiting, pale skin and stomach ache), short-term (diarrhea, low blood pressure, seizures, shallow breathing, slower heartbeat, tiredness and weakness/slow muscles) and long-term (cancer, heart disease, withdrawal and lung problems).

# VAPING

**What is it:** Vaping refers to inhaling nicotine as a heated liquid. It involves the use of an e-cigarette, which is a battery-powered device. However, the device can contain other substances besides nicotine. First, the liquid is put into the device. When the device is turned on, the liquid is heated hot enough to become vapor. The user then inhales the vapor.

**Signs of Use:** sweet fragrances (smell of liquid used in vaping device), mood swings, shortness of breath, weight loss, nausea/vomiting, mouth sores, abdominal coughing, throat clearing or possession of items associated with vaping devices or liquids used in vaping devices.

**Common Names:** Common names for e-cigarettes include, vapes, Vape pens, Pod mods, E-hookahs, Tanks, Electronic nicotine delivery systems, or ENDS, and Plugs. Common names for the liquid include, E-juice, E-liquid, Cartridges, Pods and Oil

**Effects of the substance:** Vaping poses many dangers to health, such as, addiction, harm to brain development, cancer, exposure to toxins, exploding e-cigarette devices, lung damage and accidental absorption of vaping liquid through the skin or eyes

# HOW TO HELP?

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- ❖ **Use active listening.** Be curious as to what your pre-teen or teen thinks about substance use through use of open-ended questions, use of reflecting back what you hear them say and use of “I” statements to express yourself.
- ❖ **Understand your influence as a parent.** Teens say that when it comes to drugs and alcohol, their parents are the most important influence. Ask your child what might happen if she or he does try to experiment with substances. This gets your child to think about the future, what her or his boundaries are around substance use — and some possible negative consequences. (Example: “It’s not worth the risk to get kicked off the team and ruin my chances for a scholarship by partying and using drugs or alcohol”).
- ❖ **Provide your child with necessary tools.** Assist your child with devising an action plan on how she or he will avoid using substances when the time comes that the substances are offered. For example: “I forgot something in my locker”, “I am supposed to be at a friend’s house right now”, “My mom just texted and I need to go home”, etc. Assist your child with planning ahead of time so they are prepared to face this challenge as it arises.

# HOW TO HELP? (CONTINUED)

- ❖ **Share stories.** Stories can be powerful teaching tools. Ask your child her or his thoughts and feelings about personal history of substance use by someone you and your child are close to, or after reading or hearing stories related to substance use in the news or other means of social media.
- ❖ **Offer empathy & support.** Let your child know you understand. The pre-teen/teen years can be tough. Acknowledge that everyone struggles sometimes, but substances are not a useful or healthy way to cope with problems, no matter how normalized they may seem. Remind your child that you are always there for support.
- ❖ **Monitor, Secure and Dispose of Medications/Substances in Your Home.** Be sure that you are being responsible with any medications in your home whether they are prescribed or over the counter. Also be mindful of legal substances such as tobacco products and alcohol in your home with your own children and your children's friends.

# HOW TO HELP? (CONTINUED)

- ❖ **Seek Non-Opioid Alternatives for Managing Pain for Injury.** Discuss alternate options with your provider for yourself and your child if an opioid can be avoided to manage pain or treat an injury.
- ❖ **Help them build a coping kit.** You can help your child learn a variety of coping skills. You can encourage your child to try: deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, use of a stress ball, writing it out, talk back to worries and reframe thoughts, get help from a trusted adult or implementing other care skills or coping skills.
- ❖ **Initiate conversations.** It's up to parents to initiate a conversation with their children if drug use is suspected. One in five parents who suspect their pre-teen/teen is using drugs do not intervene to prevent further drug use. If you are unsure about how to approach this topic with your child, seek support from another adult or professional.
- ❖ **Consult with a professional.** Contact a professional (primary care physician, substance abuse counselor, mental health professional, school counselor, school nurse) to determine if your child needs a higher level of support and care.

# WHAT CAN YOU DO IF THIS IS IMPACTING YOU OR A FRIEND?

- ❖ Go to a trusted adult to talk about what you are feeling, thinking or experiencing
- ❖ Begin journaling your thoughts and feelings
- ❖ If a friend is struggling with use of substances, you can go to a trusted adult with your friend, for example you can walk your friend to the school counselor's office during your lunch period
- ❖ If your friend is not open to your help but you are worried about your friend, then you should go to an adult that you trust for help
- ❖ There are solutions! Do not try to get through this alone!
- ❖ If you think a family member has a problem with substances, talk to an adult you trust - like a parent, coach, teacher, doctor, school counselor, a friend's parent, etc. - right away.
- ❖ REMEMBER, treatment is available and people can get better.

# LOGAN ELM RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

- — — ❖ Jennifer Murphy, School Social Worker  
(740) 474-7538 Ext 1413
- ❖ Grace King, School Counselor at Logan Elm High School  
(740) 474-7503 Ext 1307
- ❖ Joanna Shipe, School Counselor at Logan Elm High School  
(740) 474-7503 Ext 1306
- ❖ Nikole Bunting, School Counselor at McDowell  
(740) 474-7538 Ext 1404
- ❖ Tahnee Grube, School Counselor at Laurelville and Washington Elementary  
(740) 332-2021
- ❖ Hannah Brewster, School Counselor at Saltcreek Intermediate and Pickaway Elementary  
(740) 332-4212
- ❖ Jennifer Russell, District School Nurse  
(740) 477-4430
- ❖ Amy Hoover, District School Nurse Assistant  
(740) 477-4430



# ONLINE RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

- ❖ <https://www.adolescenthealth.org/Resources/Clinical-Care-Resources/Substance-Use/Substance-Use-Resources-For-Adolesc.aspx>
- ❖ <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>
- ❖ [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families and Youth/Resource Centers/Substance Use Resource Center/Home.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Centers/Substance_Use_Resource_Center/Home.aspx)
- ❖ <https://www.smartrecovery.org/teens/>