

spice  
rx drugs  
hydrocodone  
inhalants  
dxm  
stimulants  
marijuana  
k2 depressants



**GET IT  
STRAIGHT!**

**The Facts About Drugs**  
**STUDENT GUIDE**



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Dear Student:

The Drug Enforcement Administration and Boys & Girls Clubs of America decided to join forces to respond to the problem of drug abuse among teens – a problem that continues to pose a serious risk to young people. We know that teens today face challenges from every direction – pressure from peers, media influences, faulty information, and “hype” about drugs – and, more than ever before, need reliable facts in order to make positive choices.

So, we looked to four young people – probably a lot like you – to help us out and provide input about the kinds of questions that concern teens. We chose Jessica, Greg, Marquita, and Juan because, like you, they’ve faced the pressures of school, social life, and family – and, like you, they’ve heard a lot about different kinds of drugs.

These four teens became our drug-prevention team leaders, and we asked each of them to research and study one of these substances: cough medicines and over-the-counter medicines, prescription drugs, inhalants, and marijuana. What they discovered is that there’s a lot of faulty and inaccurate information out there that many teens accept at face value.

Jessica, Greg, Marquita, and Juan will share their discoveries with you themselves. They’ll guide you on this journey, as you learn the truth about drug abuse and understand the negative impact it has in the lives of young people. We hope that the learning shared by these four teens will be as eye-opening for you as it was for them – and that their discoveries will inspire you to Get It Straight! about drug abuse.

*The Drug Enforcement Administration  
and  
Boys & Girls Clubs of America*



# INTRODUCTION

## Get It Straight!

Some of the most dangerous drugs abused by teens are those that are readily available – prescription drugs, cough medicine and over-the-counter medications, household products used as inhalants, marijuana, K2 or Spice, and tobacco and alcohol. Because some of these substances are relatively easy to get and legal when used for their intended purposes, teens often believe they aren’t harmful. But these drugs are extremely harmful and dangerous when used by teens to get high.

*Get It Straight!* is designed to help you expose common myths about drugs and learn the truth behind the myths – in short, to “get it straight.” This Student Guide will help you understand the harmful effects of these types of drugs on your health. The questions, activities, and role-plays are designed to be done in small groups – and to help you discover the truth about these substances by finding the answers on your own.

## Drug Prevention Teams

This guide grew out of a school assignment to research drugs. To make the assignment more fun and interesting, we decided to form four drug-prevention teams. Each team leader researched and studied one of the following drugs: cough medicines and over-the-counter medicines, prescription drugs, inhalants, and marijuana. We included these drugs because national surveys indicate that middle-school kids use them the most.

We're the team leaders – Jessica, Greg, Marquita, and Juan – and we're probably a lot like you. We're all about the same age and have similar concerns and questions about drugs. We face the same pressures of school, social life, and family that you do. Like most teens, we'd heard a lot about different kinds of drugs. But here's what we did to get the truth:

- We consulted **websites** sponsored by the federal government **and nongovernment organizations**.
- We interviewed **community experts** on drugs, such as a Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent, a school nurse, and a local pharmacist.
- To research **drug trends**, we talked to different people – a local hospital emergency-room doctor about drug overdoses; the school counselor to find out data on drug use from the school survey; the assistant principal about the number of students suspended for alcohol and drug violations, and the school resource officer about the drugs kids were using.
- Each of us also looked at **national surveys on drug use** and found out just how many youth were using drugs and the trends in drug use.

The goal of the assignment wasn't only to present the facts, but also to help other teens make the right decision not to use drugs. We'll be guiding you through the process of learning the facts about these drugs – and sharing with you what we've learned. The more informed you are, the more confidently you can make the right decision about not using drugs.

# DRUG PREVENTION TEAM LEADERS



## Cough Medicine/ Over-the-Counter Drugs

**Question:** Why is using cough medicine to get high so bad?

**Answer:** In large quantities, the ingredient in cough medicine (dextromethorphan/DXM) causes impaired motor function, numbness, nausea, vomiting, and increases heart rate and blood pressure.

## Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs

**Question:** Why is taking prescription drugs to get high so bad?

**Answer:** Prescription drugs when prescribed can help people heal from an illness or recover from surgery. Taking prescription drugs that are not prescribed to you to get high can be very dangerous and addictive.



# DRUG PREVENTION TEAM LEADERS

## Inhalants

**Question:** Is sniffing a few chemicals really that bad?

**Answer:** A user can suffer from Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome, which means the user can die the first, 10th or 100th time he or she uses an inhalant. Inhalants are extremely toxic to the brain and other organs.



## Marijuana

**Question:** Is smoking marijuana really harmful?

**Answer:** Marijuana can affect learning and memory and cause distorted perception, difficulty in thinking, problem-solving, and coordination.



# OVERVIEW OF DRUGS AND TEENS

In our research, we found that teen drug abuse continues to be a problem in the U.S. – studies show that it's been on the rise in the past few years. Contrary to popular belief, though, most teens still don't take drugs. But we also learned that the rise in drug abuse among teens has to do with how much they know about the dangers. So, the greatest defense against rising drug use is information – discovering the truth behind the myths. As kids learn the very real dangers of drug abuse, they're less likely to try them and more likely to say "no." But, before we learn about some of the common myths, take this simple quiz to find out what you already know.

## How Much Do You Know?

- 1) The first time a teen uses a substance to get high, where is it likely to have come from?
  - a) student drug dealers at school
  - b) siblings or friends
  - c) drug dealers in the community
  - d) parents or other adult relatives
- 2) Which of the following is true of inhalant abuse?
  - a) it is most prevalent among middle-school youth
  - b) it can cause permanent brain, liver, nerve, and kidney damage
  - c) inhalants can be easily, legally purchased
  - d) inhalants are found among many common household items
  - e) all of the above
- 3) Excess doses of cough-suppressant products contain dextromethorphan (DXM)?
  - a) can produce a dissociative state
  - b) can be bought legally by teens
  - c) can produce hallucinations
  - d) can produce irregular heartbeat, high-blood pressure and other serious problems
  - e) can cause organ damage and death
  - f) all of the above

1) b; 2) e; 3) f

# TOP 10 Myths (and Truths) about Drugs

One of the biggest problems with teens is that they almost always have faulty information about drugs. Kids tend to believe what they hear from other teens, especially the “hype” about the upside of doing drugs. The truth is: there is no upside to using drugs. Here are the top 10 popular myths teens tend to believe about drugs – and the truth behind each myth:

- 1. Myth** – Marijuana is harmless.  
**TRUTH** – Marijuana smokers risk the same health problems as tobacco smokers: bronchitis, emphysema, and bronchial asthma. They also experience lack of coordination, memory problems, and poor concentration.
- 2. Myth** – Using drugs doesn’t change the brain.  
**TRUTH** – Drugs change the brain, and this can lead to abuse, addiction, and other very serious physical and neurological (mind) problems.
- 3. Myth** – Legal drugs are helpful; illegal drugs are harmful.  
**TRUTH** – It doesn’t matter whether a drug is legal or illegal because all drugs can be abused. Even if a federally regulated drug is considered “safe,” misuse and abuse of this drug can still have harmful effects.
- 4. Myth** – Parents don’t have any influence over a teen’s use of marijuana.  
**TRUTH** – Marijuana use occurs less often among teens who think their parents would strongly disapprove of their trying marijuana once or twice (2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health).
- 5. Myth** – Using drugs is a normal part of growing up and experimentation is harmless.  
**TRUTH** – The majority of teens reject drugs. According to a national survey, 79 percent of 8th-graders report NOT ever using illicit drugs (Monitoring the Future, 2010).
- 6. Myth** – You can’t overdose on prescription drugs to get high the first time.  
**TRUTH** – You can overdose on any drug even the first time you use it.
- 7. Myth** – Many 8th graders abuse inhalants.  
**TRUTH** – According to a national survey, almost 92 percent of 8th graders reported NOT using inhalants in the past year (Monitoring the Future, 2010).
- 8. Myth** – Everybody is doing it!  
**TRUTH** – Not “everybody” is doing it. In fact, most teens are not doing drugs. Those who do drugs do so infrequently, at parties or on occasion. Most teens do not drink or do drugs regularly.
- 9. Myth** – It can’t hurt to try it just once.  
**TRUTH** – It can hurt to try drugs. You may do something you regret while under the influence, you may get violent or become the victim of violence, you could get very sick and, in extreme cases, you may even die.
- 10. Myth** – Drug use is voluntary . . . I can quit whenever I want!  
**TRUTH** – It’s true that drug use is a choice at first, but over time, it alters the chemistry of the brain and body – resulting in a compulsive and uncontrollable need for the drug. Addiction is a serious side effect of drug abuse.

## Factors that Influence Drug Use

Scientists have identified “risk factors” to help identify the people most likely to use drugs. Risk factors can increase a person’s chances of drug abuse, but not everyone with risk factors for drug abuse actually abuses drugs. Here are some signs of risk that may predict later drug use:

- Having friends who abuse drugs
- Having a parent or caregiver who is not a responsible parent
- Having a caregiver or parent who abuses drugs or suffers from mental illness
- Aggressive behavior
- Lack of self control
- Poor classroom behavior or social skills
- Academic failure
- A school or community that has lax rules about alcohol and drug use
- Belief that drugs are not harmful
- Perception that family or friends approve of drug use

Here are some factors – called “protective factors” – that may help a person not to use drugs:

- Being active in hobbies, sports, or volunteer activities
- Having a mentor or caring adult in your life
- Doing well in school
- Home, school, and community rules that support not using drugs or alcohol
- Strong attachment to a school, religious organization, or after-school program
- Belief that drugs are harmful

## Think about It

Read through the list of the “risk factors” and “protective factors.” What do you notice in common among the risk factors? What about the protective factors? If you were going to make a general statement about teens most at risk for drug use, and those least at risk for drug use, what would you say? How important do you think it is for teens to have information about drug abuse? How important do you think it is for them to have positive adult guidance in their lives?



- ✓ You can't predict the effect an illegal drug or prescription drug can have on you – especially if it's the first time you try it – even if it's a small amount.
- ✓ Everyone's brain and body chemistry is different. Everyone's tolerance for drugs is different.
- ✓ Giving a prescription drug prescribed to you to another person or family member is illegal.
- ✓ Using drugs can lead to abuse, addiction, serious health problems and even death.
- ✓ Legal prescription and over-the-counter drugs can be just as dangerous as illegal drugs.

## From Drug Use to Drug Addiction

When faced with the consequences of using drugs, you might think, "This is just a scare tactic. It can't happen to me." Or you might think, "It could happen to others, but it won't happen to me." But if you think that using drugs can't affect your health, your family and social relationships, school performance, or your future – think again.

Using drugs – and sometimes just being around friends who use them – can have negative legal, health, social, and financial consequences. Think about it: What can happen when you get in a car with a driver who's high? What can happen if you come to school high and you are sent to the principal's office?

And what can happen if you make a decision to use drugs? The first time it's a choice. After that, it may not be voluntary – you start abusing the drug and may become addicted to it. And sometimes it's hard to know the total consequences of your choice – until it's too late. You can decide to not use drugs and resist when you are offered drugs. You have the power.

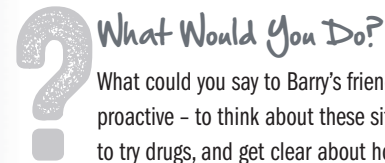
### WHAT IS DRUG ADDICTION?

We wanted to learn more about drug addiction, so we looked it up on the Just Think Twice website (<http://www.justthinktwice.com>) and here's the definition we found:

*Drug addiction is a chronic, relapsing disease that affects the brain and causes compulsive drug-seeking and use despite harmful consequences. Using drugs changes your brain's structure and function. Addiction is a brain disease because drugs change the brain, they change its structure, and how it works. And although the initial decision to take drugs may be voluntary, over time, the changes in your brain can weaken your self-control and ability to make sound decisions, while sending intense impulses to take drugs.*

## It Could Happen to You

Imagine that you've just started the 9th grade, and it's the third week of school. You have an older brother named Barry in the 11th grade. One day, as you're walking to school, some of your brother's 11th-grade friends pull up in a car and ask if you want a ride. Barry isn't with them, but you say "yes" anyway, and once you're in the car, you immediately regret it. They ask if you want to get high before class. They already make fun of you for being Barry's younger brother, so you know they'll really give you grief if you say you don't want to smoke pot. Now you're wondering if maybe Barry smokes marijuana, and you don't know what to say.



### What Would You Do?

What could you say to Barry's friends? What are some ways to say "no?" It's a good idea to be proactive – to think about these situations before they occur. Think about why you don't want to try drugs, and get clear about how you'll communicate this to anyone who pressures you.

### Teens Weigh In

"Getting messed up is just another way of leaving yourself behind."

– Teen in Above the Influence Drug Prevention Ad

## Group Activities

**Web Hunt** – Do an informal survey with some of your friends to find out what they believe about various drugs – especially marijuana, prescription drugs, inhalants, and cough medicine/over-the-counter drugs. Then conduct a web search to discover the truths behind their beliefs. Start with Just Think Twice, <http://www.justthinktwice.com>, NIDA for Teens, <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/> and Above the Influence, <http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/>.

**Shatter the Myths** – Explore the National Drug Facts Week website (<http://drugfactsweek.drugabuse.gov>). Find out about National Drug Facts Week, plan an event in your area, or take the interactive National Drug IQ Challenge.

**The Plain Truth** – Have each member of your small group select a fact sheet from the National Institute on Drug Abuse website, NIDA InfoFacts: The Science Behind Drug Abuse (<http://drugabuse.gov/infofacts/infofactsindex.html>) and become familiar with the facts about that particular substance. Share the information you have learned.



## Reality Check

“ I enjoyed huffing because it was cheap, an easy high to obtain, and in 20 minutes my high would be gone so no one would know. Inhalants took up so much of my time, thoughts, and energy that I didn't realize my life was getting totally out of control. Huffing was becoming a big problem, and an everyday occurrence. I did it alone, I did it with friends, I did it when I felt sad, lonely or scared - even when I was happy. It was my escape. I did it anytime - I didn't care about family, friends, life or anything.

Finally, I got into treatment for three months, and actually, I feel lucky. In fact, I know I am lucky. Huffing could have killed me. I started to huff when I was 13 years old . . . that's too young to do a lot of things, including becoming an addict, or dying. ”

- "Addicted to Inhalants," Check Yourself Drugfree.org, <http://checkyourself.com/>

## Find Out for Yourself

Check out these sites for more on drug abuse in the U.S. today:

### Drug Enforcement Administration

<http://www.dea.gov>  
<http://www.justthinktwice.com>

### Monitoring the Future

<http://www.monitoringthefuture.org>

### National Survey on Drug Use and Health

<http://oas.samhsa.gov>

### SAMHSA - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<http://samhsa.gov>

### National Institute on Drug Abuse

<http://www.drugabuse.gov>

### Office of National Drug Control Policy

<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov>

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov>

### National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>



## COUGH MEDICINES AND OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS



### Jessica Talks about Cough Medicines and Over-the-Counter Drugs (OTC)

*Before I started my research on cough medicines and over-the-counter drugs, it never occurred to me that teens took these to get high. I learned a lot about how teens use these substances - and what effect they have - but first, let's see what you know about them.*

### How Much Do You Know?

- 1) Abusing over-the-counter medicines can be as dangerous as abusing illegal drugs. T or F
- 2) How many teens in the U.S. report having abused cough medicine to get high?
  - a) one percent
  - b) five percent
  - c) 10 percent
- 3) Which of the following can result from taking extreme amounts of cough medicine?
  - a) delusions
  - b) stomach pain, nausea, and vomiting
  - c) high-blood pressure and rapid heartbeat
  - d) fever and headaches
  - e) loss of consciousness
  - f) all of the above

1) True; 2) c; 3) f



# TOP 10 K JUNK R ERW RJK Medicine and OTC-Drug Abuse

You may have figured out that abusing over-the-counter drugs – such as cough syrup and cold medicines – can be just as dangerous and harmful as illegal drugs sold on the street. I learned a lot about these substances, and you will too as you do some research of your own, but here are 10 important facts to know about the abuse of cough medicines and over-the-counter drugs:

1. **DXM/Dextromethorphan** – Cough medicine contains DXM (dextromethorphan). The typical adult dose is 15 or 30 mg taken three to four times daily.
2. **High Dosages** – DXM is abused by consuming high doses of OTC liquid cough medicines in order to experience joy and visual and auditory hallucinations.
3. **Most Common Form** – Illicit use of DXM is often referred to as “Robo-tripping,” “skittling” or “dexing.” The first two terms are derived from the products that are most commonly abused, Robitussin and Coricidin HBP.
4. **Tablets and Gel Capsules** – DXM abuse often occurs with over-the-counter liquid cough medicines, but more recently, abuse of tablet and gel capsule preparations has increased. (Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Diversion Control, [http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drugs\\_concern/dextro\\_m/dextro\\_m.htm](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drugs_concern/dextro_m/dextro_m.htm))
5. **Internet Versions** – DXM powder, sold over the Internet, is also a source of DXM for abuse. The powdered form of DXM poses even more risks due to the uncertainty of composition and dose.
6. **Street Names** – The street names for these substances are CCC, Dex, DXM, Poor Man’s PCP, Robo, Rojo, Skittles, Triple C, and Velvet.
7. **Immediate Effects** – Some of the many effects associated with high-doses of DXM include confusion, inappropriate laughter, agitation, paranoia, hallucinations and other sensory changes, including the feeling of floating and changes in hearing and touch.
8. **Long-term Consequences** – Because of the other ingredients in cough medicines, long-term abuse of these substances is associated with serious health problems such as high blood pressure (from pseudoephedrine), liver damage (from acetaminophen) or bone-marrow/nerve-cell damage or cardiovascular toxicity (from anti-histamines). (Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Diversion Control, [http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drugs\\_concern/dextro\\_m/dextro\\_m.htm](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drugs_concern/dextro_m/dextro_m.htm))
9. **DXM Intoxication** – DXM intoxication involves being over-excited or lethargic, loss of coordination, slurred speech, sweating, hypertension, and/or involuntary spasmodic movement of the eyeballs.
10. **Combining with Other Substances** – The use of high doses of DXM with alcohol or other drugs is particularly dangerous, and deaths have been reported. DXM taken with antidepressants can be life threatening.



3% of 8th-graders, 5% of 10th-graders, and nearly 6% of 12th-graders reported that they used cough/cold medicines and over-the-counter drugs as a way to get high.

– 2010 Monitoring the Future Survey

## Think about It

Cough medicines and over-the-counter drugs may seem harmless, but they’re powerful chemicals that can cause distortions in vision, perception, and sense of time if abused. The human body is a finely-tuned machine: does it make sense to experiment by taking chemicals or medications you don’t need and when you don’t know what they’ll do to you? Keeping my body healthy is important to me and, if you think about it, it probably is to you, too.

## It Could Happen to You

You’re at your friend’s Kendra’s house after school on a Friday afternoon, along with three other kids (three girls and two guys), and you’re trying to decide what to do that night. Since you’re in the 8th grade, no one can drive, so you decide you’ll just stay at Kendra’s house and watch a movie. The guys seem a little restless and say they have to go to the store. When they return, they have a bunch of cough syrup and say you’ll all get high if you drink enough of it. Kendra’s parents won’t be home until much later, so you’re concerned what these boys might do in the meantime. Kendra and the other girls try some, but you really don’t want to do it.

## ? What Would You Do?

What could you say to Kendra and the others? What are some ways to say “no?” You can say that Kendra’s parents will be home later, but what about the times when there are no parents around? Remember that it’s okay to say what you want. Think about why you don’t want to try drugs, and get clear about how you’ll communicate this to anyone who pressures you.

### Teens Weigh In

“I live by the motto of ‘Be a Voice, Save a Life.’ By speaking up and letting your friends know what they’re doing to themselves, you could end up saving their lives.”

– Teens Ask Teens, [JustThinkTwice.com](http://JustThinkTwice.com)



## Group Activity

**News Article** – Research the effects of cough medicines and over-the-counter (OTC) medications on the body and the mind – both the immediate effects and the long-term consequences. Write a newspaper or magazine article to summarize for others the important information about the dangers of abusing these substances. Include photos you download from various websites and format your article as it would be in a newspaper or journal. You may want to submit the piece to the local paper or begin saving your articles to create a drug-prevention newsletter.



## Reality Check

“When I used DXM, I thought that it enhanced my writing, it made me think more, it made me become more artistic – I thought it enhanced the talents I already had. I would do my writing and my art while I was tripping, and I go back and look at it now and I’m like, ‘I thought this was good? I can’t even read it.’ It was horrible. I was so deluded into thinking that because it gave me that feeling – and that’s what I was so attracted to about it and that’s what I was ultimately addicted to – that feeling.”

– “Make Up Your Own Mind about Cough Medicine,” The Partnership™ at DrugFree.org

## Find Out for Yourself

Here are a few sites to check out for more information on cough medicines and OTC drugs:

### Just Think Twice – Dextromethorphan (DXM)

[http://www.justthinktwice.com/drugs/dextromethorphan\\_dxm.html](http://www.justthinktwice.com/drugs/dextromethorphan_dxm.html)

### NIDA for Teens – Facts on Dextromethorphan (DXM)

[http://teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx/pdf/PEERx\\_Toolkit\\_FactSheets\\_DXM.pdf](http://teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx/pdf/PEERx_Toolkit_FactSheets_DXM.pdf)

### Above the Influence – Over-the Counter Drug Abuse Facts

<http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/facts/drugsotc/>



## Greg Talks about Non-medical Use of Prescription Drugs

When I started this research assignment, I wondered: How can prescription drugs be harmful when they’re prescribed by doctors? I thought prescription drugs couldn’t be bad because they help a lot of people. Let’s see how much you know about prescription-drug abuse.

### How Much Do You Know?

- 1) Which of the following is safe to do if you’re in serious pain?
  - a) take a pain medication prescribed for your mother
  - b) take a pain medication prescribed for a friend
  - c) take double the dose that is prescribed for you
  - d) none of the above
- 2) Prescription drug abuse can be
  - a) not as risky as using illegal drugs
  - b) as risky as using illegal drugs
  - c) risky only if the drugs were prescribed for someone else
  - d) risky only if a person takes the drugs again and again
- 3) Someone is abusing a prescription drug if
  - a) it was prescribed for someone else
  - b) they use more than the doctor prescribed
  - c) they take the drug for entertainment or pleasure
  - d) all of the above

1) d; 2) b; 3) d

# TOP 10 ~~BOOK MARK~~ ~~REVIEW~~ Prescription Drug Abuse

It's true that prescription drugs, when used as prescribed by a doctor or dentist, can be effective medicine. But using prescription drugs to get high can have very serious consequences. It all depends on the who, the how, and the why - who the medicine is prescribed for (you or someone else); how you are taking it (as prescribed or not); and why you are taking it (to get well or to get high).

There are different types of prescription drugs that are abused. The most abused drugs include narcotics (OxyContin®, Vicodin®), depressants (Valium®, Xanax®), and stimulants (Adderall®, Ritalin®). You'll be finding out more about each of these types in your own research, but just to get you started, here are 10 important facts to know about prescription-drug abuse.

- 1. NARCOTICS** - Narcotics refer to opium, opium derivatives, and their semi-synthetic substitutes. These drugs are also known as "opioids." Examples include the illicit drug heroin and pharmaceutical drugs like OxyContin®, Vicodin®, codeine, morphine, methadone, and fentanyl.
- 2. Method of Abuse** - These can be in tablets, capsules, skin patches, powder or chunks in varying colors, liquids for oral use and injection, syrups, suppositories, and lollipops. They are swallowed, smoked, sniffed, or injected.
- 3. Effects on the Body** - Besides their medical use, narcotics/opioids produce a general sense of well-being by reducing tension, anxiety, and aggression. Other effects include drowsiness, inability to concentrate and apathy, slowed physical activity, constriction of the pupils, flushing of the face and neck, constipation, nausea, vomiting and, most importantly, slowed breathing.
- 4. DEPRESSANTS** - Depressants refer to those drugs used to treat anxiety, insomnia, seizure disorders, and sleep disorders as well as those used to relax muscles and sedate. They can be in the form of pills, syrups, or injectable liquids.
- 5. Method of Abuse** - Teens abuse depressants to experience euphoria. Depressants are also used with other drugs to add to the other drugs' high or to deal with their side effects. Abusers take higher doses than people taking the drugs under a doctor's supervision for therapeutic purposes.
- 6. Effects on the Body** - Depressants induce sleep, relieve anxiety and muscle spasms and prevent seizures. They also cause amnesia, reduce reaction time, impair mental functioning and judgment, and cause confusion. Long-term use of depressants produces psychological dependence and tolerance. Unwanted physical effects include slurred speech, bad motor coordination, weakness, headache, lightheadedness, blurred vision, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, low blood pressure, and slowed breathing. Depressants can be fatal if they are combined with other drugs or alcohol.

- 7. STIMULANTS** - Stimulants speed up the body's systems. This class of drugs includes prescription drugs like amphetamines (Adderall® and Dexedrine®), methylphenidate (Concerta® and Ritalin®); diet aids (such as Didrex®, Bontril®, Preludin®, Fastin®, Adipex P®, Ionomin® and Meridia®) and illicitly produced drugs (such as methamphetamine, cocaine, and methcathinone).
- 8. Method of Abuse** - Many of these are legally prescribed and used to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and attention deficit disorder (ADD), but can be abused as a way to get high. These substances look like pills, powder, rocks, or injectable liquids, but are usually pills or capsules that are swallowed.
- 9. Effects on the Body** - When abused, stimulants can produce a feeling of exhilaration, enhance self esteem, improve mental and physical performance, increase activity, reduce appetite, extend wakefulness for prolonged periods - creating a sense of being "high." Chronic, high-dose use is frequently associated with agitation, hostility, panic, aggression, and suicidal or homicidal tendencies. Paranoia, sometimes accompanied by both auditory and visual hallucinations, may also occur.
- 10. Risk of Addiction** - All three types of prescription drugs, when abused, may create psychological dependence so the person becomes addicted to them. It is important to note that some of these substances are so potent that a single dose can be lethal to an inexperienced user. Physical dependence is a consequence of chronic use, and withdrawal takes place when drug use is discontinued.

## STREET NAMES

**Narcotics:** Hillbilly Heroin, Lean or Purple Drank, OC, Ox, Oxy, Oxycotton, Sippin' Syrup

**Depressants:** Barbs, Benzos, Downers, Georgia Home Boy, GHB, Grievous Bodily Harm, Liquid X, Nerve Pills, Phennies, R2, Reds, Rookies, Trophies, Trunks, Yellows

**Stimulants:** Bennies, Black Beauties, Cat, Coke, Crank, Crystal, Flake, Ice, Pellets, R-Ball, Skippy, Snow, Speed, Uppers, Vitamin R





- ✓ A national survey found that 3.1% of youth ages 12 to 17 years reported non-medical use of prescription pain medication (2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health).
- ✓ Each day, approximately 2,500 teens use prescription drugs to get high for the first time. They get their prescription drugs from family members, friends, and the home medicine cabinet (Partnership at drugfree.org).

## Think about It

You've heard of Russian Roulette, right? It's putting a single bullet in a gun, spinning the cylinder, and pulling the trigger. Taking medicine prescribed for someone else is like playing Russian roulette - in most cases, you don't even know what the drug is and you have no idea what effect it will have on your body and mind. Are you really willing to take a chance like that?

## It Could Happen to You

You see your three closest friends at school, and one of them, Samuel, says he's stolen some pills from the medicine cabinet at home - it's called Dexedrine®- and it's supposed to make you feel great and give you energy. Everyone's excited about doing it this weekend on a big camping trip you're all taking, but you're worried. You know someone who took this drug and he said it made his heart beat really fast and made it hard for him to breathe. But the four of you will be sharing a tent this weekend, and you don't see how you'll get out of taking it.

## ? What Would You Do?

What could you say to Samuel and your other friends? What are some ways to say "no?" It's not always easy being the odd man out, but remember that it's okay to say what you want. Think about why you don't want to try drugs, and get clear about how you'll communicate this to anyone who pressures you.

### Teens Weigh In

“Drugs can have a very strong effect on you mentally, emotionally, and physically. Most kids are totally unaware of all the horrible things that come along with doing drugs. They think that just trying out a drug won't harm them in any way, but they're wrong. You can get attached to some drugs by doing them only once. Addiction comes quickly - the more you take a drug, the more your body craves it, and the harder it is to stop doing it.”

- Teens Ask Teens, JustThinkTwice.com

## Group Activity

**Media Round-Up** - Conduct an Internet search to find articles (online magazines, journals, and newspapers) that discuss prescription-drug abuse among teens. Highlight key quotes from each of the articles, statements that sum up the dangers and long-term consequences of prescription-drug abuse. Once you've gathered a number of articles, mount them on a piece of poster board for display.



## Reality Check

“When I was 14, I started abusing prescription painkillers. Over the next few years, it got a little worse and I also started drinking. I started dating this one girl, and I quit everything when she found out. A few mornings after she broke up with me, I went all out with everything. I took so many pills I couldn't even count them, not even sure what they were. I just knew they would get me high. I got to the point where I never had any clue what I was doing, where I was, how I got there, anything. Several months of my life are gone. I still struggle with it daily and have relapsed several times. Not a day goes by when I don't sit here craving some pills . . . anything. Please don't let yourself get into any of this . . . it has ruined my life.”

- Your Words, Abovetheinfluence.com



## Find Out for Yourself

There are several good sites that provide information about prescription-drug abuse, but here are the ones we found most helpful:

**Just Think Twice – Fiction: It's Safe to Use Prescription Drugs to Get High**

[http://www.justthinktwice.com/factsfiction/fiction\\_its\\_safe\\_to\\_use\\_prescription\\_drugs\\_to\\_get\\_high.html](http://www.justthinktwice.com/factsfiction/fiction_its_safe_to_use_prescription_drugs_to_get_high.html)

**NIDA for Teens – Facts on Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs**

[http://teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx/pdf/PEERx\\_Toolkit\\_FactSheets\\_RxDrugs.pdf](http://teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx/pdf/PEERx_Toolkit_FactSheets_RxDrugs.pdf)

**TeensHealth™ – Prescription Drug Abuse**

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/drugs/prescription\\_drug\\_abuse.html?tracking=T\\_RelatedArticle](http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/prescription_drug_abuse.html?tracking=T_RelatedArticle)

**Above the Influence – Prescription Drug Facts (Rx)**

<http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/facts/drugsprescriptionrx>



## Marquita Talks about Inhalants

I'd heard about inhalants before I started my research, but I thought it involved just sniffing markers to get high. Now I've learned that it's so much more – and you will, too, as you learn the facts about inhalants. But first, here's a brief quiz to see what you already know.

### How Much Do You Know?

- 1) Which of the following are abused as inhalants?
  - a) rubber cement
  - b) glue
  - c) spray paint
  - d) computer dust cleaner
  - e) nail polish remover
  - f) nitrous oxide (Whippets)
  - g) all of the above
- 2) Kids who use inhalants don't face any consequences. T or F
- 3) What are some signs of inhalant abuse?
  - a) paint or stains on the body or clothing
  - b) spots or sores around the mouth
  - c) red or runny eyes or nose
  - d) chemical breath
  - e) all of the above

1) g; 2) false; 3) e

You can see that there are quite a few substances that are commonly abused as inhalants. There's a lot of really good information online about this form of abuse, but here are 10 important facts to know about inhalants:

- 1. Inhalant Abuse** – Inhalants are breathable chemical vapors found in common household products that contain solvents, aerosols, or gases. Inhalant abuse is the deliberate inhaling or sniffing of these products in order to get high.
- 2. Most Common Form** – The most commonly abused inhalants are glue, lighter fluid, cleaning fluids, and spray paints – all of which have chemical vapors that can be inhaled. These are common household products that are extremely dangerous when inhaled.
- 3. Method of Abuse** – These substances are breathed through the nose or the mouth in a variety of ways, such as “sniffing,” “snorting,” or “bagging,” which is sniffing or inhaling fumes from substances sprayed inside a plastic or paper bag.
- 4. Other Methods** – “Huffing” is another method of abuse, and it involves inhaling the substance from an inhalant-soaked rag stuffed in the mouth or inhaling from balloons filled with nitrous oxide.
- 5. Users of Inhalants** – Inhalants are often among the first drugs that young children use. About one in five kids report having used inhalants by the eighth grade.
- 6. Street Names** – The street names for inhalants are Gluey, Huff, Rush, or Whippets.
- 7. Immediate Effects** – Within minutes of inhalation, the user experiences intoxication along with other effects similar to those produced by alcohol. These effects may include slurred speech, an inability to coordinate movements, happy feelings, and dizziness.
- 8. Other Impacts** – There is a correlation between inhalant use and problems in school – failing grades, chronic absences, and general apathy.
- 9. Effects on the Body and Brain** – Inhalant abuse can cause damage to the parts of the brain that control thinking, moving, seeing, and hearing. Inhaled chemicals are rapidly absorbed through the lungs into the bloodstream and quickly sent to the brain and other organs. Inhalants also can dissolve the protective coating on brain cells – called myelin – which helps messages travel along the nerve cells. When it's damaged, messages move slowly, causing tremors and even problems walking and talking.
- 10. Long-term Consequences** – The effects from prolonged use cannot be reversed. Prolonged sniffing of the highly concentrated chemicals in solvents or aerosol sprays can produce irregular and rapid heart rhythms and lead to heart failure and death. Cognitive abnormalities can range from mild impairment to severe dementia.



Nearly **15%** of 8th-graders, **12%** of 10th-graders, and nearly **10%** of 12th-graders reported that they had **abused inhalants** at least once in their lives.

– 2010 Monitoring the Future Survey

## Think about It

Why do you need to know all these facts? I had that same question when I started. But think about it – isn't it important to know what's really happening to a person's brain when he gets high? If a friend says to you, “You won't believe how cool it is to inhale this paint,” you'll know that the dizzy feeling your friend likes so much means that what he's inhaling is doing serious damage to the part of the brain that controls thinking, moving, seeing, and hearing. It's a lot easier to say “no” when you understand the very real harm these drugs can do.

## It Could Happen to You

Andrew, your best friend from grammar school, goes to a bigger middle school on the other side of town. You've arranged to take the bus and meet downtown after school and when you get there, some of Andrew's new friends are with him. His friends seem pretty cool, but Andrew is acting weird and you don't know why. Several of the guys say they're going to try “huffing” and they think you'll like it too. You notice that Andrew is nervous and you think it's because he wants to fit in with his new friends, but he also knows you don't want to do drugs.

### Teens Weigh In

“Often our friends think they are invincible and that they can't ruin their lives by doing drugs. But, they can. Addiction is harmful to all involved and often tragic.”

– Teens Ask Teens, JustThinkTwice.com

## ? What Would You Do?

What could you say to Andrew and his friends? What are some ways to say “no,” especially if Andrew is counting on you to go along with his new group?

## Group Activity

**Advertising Poster** – Conduct an Internet research study on the dangers and long-term consequences of using inhalants. Design and create an advertising poster to communicate one or two key messages about the risks of inhalants. Think about effective advertising messages you have seen, the techniques designers use to convey their messages, and incorporate these strategies into your poster.



## Reality Check

“ My ex-boyfriend was older than me, and he smoked marijuana a lot. He also got angry when I asked him to stop. But after he broke up with me, I was upset and started huffing household chemicals to stop the pain. I nearly got addicted to this and stopped, and now I try to be a positive influence on others and educate them about drug abuse. ”

– Teens Ask Teens, JustThinkTwice.com

## Find Out for Yourself

To find out more about inhalants, check out these sites:

### Just Think Twice – Inhalants

<http://www.justthinktwice.com/drugs/inhalants.html>

### NIDA for Teens – Inhalants

[http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/facts\\_inhale1.php](http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/facts_inhale1.php)

### TeensHealth™ – Inhalants

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/drugs/inhalants.html#cat20140](http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/inhalants.html#cat20140)

### Above the Influence – Inhalants Facts (Whippets)

<http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/facts/druginhalants/>



# MARIJUANA

## Juan Talks about Marijuana

I thought I had the easiest substance to research, because everybody thinks they know about marijuana, right? Well, let's see how much you know by taking this brief quiz.



Juan

## How Much Do You Know?

- 1) For the past 10 years, marijuana use has been declining. T or F
- 2) Marijuana is a mind-altering drug found in the cannabis sativa plant. T or F
- 3) Marijuana in its purest form contains only three chemicals. T or F
- 4) Studies show that students who smoke marijuana tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school than those who don't smoke. T or F
- 5) Using marijuana can affect a person's memory and learning. T or F

1) false; 2) true; 3) false; 4) true; 5) true



I know it probably seems like teens smoking marijuana is becoming more and more common. It seems so common that kids tend to think it's no big deal. But marijuana is a dangerous drug, and I learned a lot of the reasons why. You'll find out more as you do your own research, but here are 10 important things to know:

- 1. Type of Drug** – Marijuana is a mind-altering (psychoactive) drug produced by the Cannabis sativa plant and contains more than 400 chemicals.
- 2. Street Names** – Street names for marijuana include: Aunt Mary, BC Bud, Blunts, Boom, Chronic, Dope, Gangster, Ganja, Grass, Hash, Herb, Hydro, Indo, Joint, Kif, Mary Jane, Mota, Pot, Reefer, Sinsemilla, Skunk, Smoke, Weed, Yerba.
- 3. Most Common Form** – Marijuana is a dry shredded green/brown mix of flowers, stems, seeds, and leaves from the Cannabis sativa plant. The mixture typically is green, brown, or gray in color and may resemble tobacco.
- 4. Method of Abuse** – Marijuana is usually smoked as a cigarette (called a joint) or in a pipe or bong. It is also smoked in blunts, which are cigars that have been emptied of tobacco and refilled with marijuana, sometimes in combination with another drug. Marijuana can be mixed with foods or brewed as a tea.
- 5. Immediate Effects on the Mind** – When marijuana is smoked, the main active ingredient (THC) passes from the lungs into the bloodstream and then to the brain. The effects are felt within minutes. Depending on the dosage and other variables, users can feel relaxed, and have altered senses of smell, sight, taste, and hearing, distorted senses of time, shifting sensory imagery, rapidly fluctuating emotions, fragmentary thoughts, impaired memory, loss of coordination, and dulling of attention. High doses of marijuana can result in mental confusion, panic reactions, and hallucinations.
- 6. Immediate Effects on the Body** – Short-term effects on the body may include sedation, blood shot eyes, increased heart rate, coughing from lung irritation, increased appetite, and decreased blood pressure.
- 7. Long-term Effects on the Mind** – Chronic marijuana use is associated with impairment of judgment, memory, and concentration; and amotivational syndrome, which is characterized by a loss of motivation, ambition, and interest in the pursuit of personal goals. Researchers have also found an association between marijuana use and an increased risk of depression; an increased risk and earlier onset of schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, especially for teens who have a genetic predisposition.
- 8. Long-term Effects on the Body** – Marijuana smokers may experience serious health problems such as bronchitis, emphysema, and bronchial asthma. Extended use may cause suppression of the immune system. Because marijuana contains toxins and carcinogens, marijuana smokers increase their risk of cancer of the head, neck, lungs, and respiratory track.

- 9. Risk of Addiction** – Marijuana is addictive. About one out of every 11 people who use it becomes addicted.
- 10. Related Risks** – Marijuana use is related to poor performance in school, increased risk of delinquency, more friends who exhibit deviant behaviors, engaging in unsafe sex, and increased violent behaviors (Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration).



*Eight percent of 8th-graders, 17 percent of 10th-graders, and 21 percent of 12th-graders reported that they had used marijuana in the past month to get high.*

*- 2010 Monitoring the Future Survey*

### K2 OR SPICE

There also is a synthetic form of marijuana, which is a mixture of common herbs sprayed with synthetic chemicals to mimic the effects of marijuana. Here are the facts about fake (synthetic) marijuana:

- \* **Street Names** – Spice, K2, Bliss, Black Mamba, Bombay Blue, Fake Weed, Genie, or Zohai.
- \* **Most Common Form** – Spice or K2 is sold in small, silvery plastic bags of dried leaves and marketed as incense that can be smoked.
- \* **Methods of Abuse** – Most versions are usually smoked in joints or pipes, but some users make K2 or Spice into a tea to drink.
- \* **Effect on the Mind and Body** – The psychological effects are similar to those of marijuana and include paranoia, panic attacks, and giddiness. While the specific physical effects of fake marijuana can vary depending on the variety consumed, use of these substances generally causes an increased heart rate and increase of blood pressure. Current research on these substances indicates that the chemicals appear to be stored in the body for long periods of time, but the long-term effects on humans are not fully known.

### True or False:

Several states have banned Spice and Spice-like products and the sale or possession of Spice. *True*



## Think about It

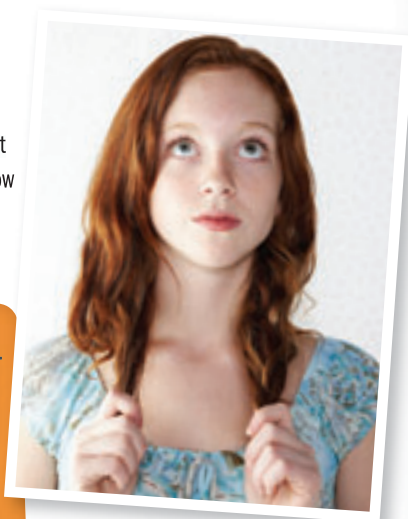
If you've ever seen anyone older who's smoked marijuana for a long time, you'll see that something's wrong. It's like they've turned off the lights and now they can't find the light switch in the dark. The truth is, some of the things kids do when they're young have lasting consequences. Doing this research has given me a new perspective on marijuana. Someone who thinks it's cool to smoke pot? Well, the way I see it now is – they're really just clueless.

## It Could Happen to You

Your best friend Marta has been dating a guy in high school for a few months, and she invites you to a party at his house so you can meet his friend. When you and Marta get to his house, there is no party – it's only Marta and her boyfriend and his friend, Victor. The guys are smoking pot and Marta joins them. You don't want to smoke, but Victor is really cool and you don't want to seem young and stupid. Plus you don't want to ruin your friendship with Marta.

## ? What Would You Do?

What could you say to Marta and the others? What are some ways to say "no?" Think about what you would say that would make it clear that you don't want to smoke, and also let Marta know that it's okay for her to say "no" too?



### Teens Weigh In

*“Teens who smoke marijuana set themselves up for a lot of medical issues ... But the worst effect of all is the decisions they make when using pot. They just aren't themselves and they don't have good judgment when they're high. There's not much stopping them from hurting the people they care about, verbally or physically. Not only are they destroying their bodies, but they're destroying their relationships with family and friends.”*

*– Teens Ask Teens, JustThinkTwice.com*

## Group Activity

**Newspaper Editorial** – Do an Internet study to research the long-term effects of marijuana on the mind and body. Write an editorial – or letter – to the local newspaper making a persuasive case for not legalizing marijuana. Include the perspective (and even quotes) of peers, teachers, parents, or others who have an opinion on the subject.



## Reality Check

*“I found out that one of my best friends smokes pot. I've NEVER done it, and don't plan on doing it. I'm just extremely worried about her. She doesn't see what's wrong with weed, and me and some of her friends try to explain to her what a bad choice it is, but she doesn't understand. She's very smart, beautiful, and talented, but her grades are slipping and she doesn't seem to care about doing fun things anymore. I'm just concerned about her safety and health.”*

*– Teens Ask Teens, JustThinkTwice.com*

## MEDICAL USE OF MARIJUANA

Is marijuana sometimes used to help relieve medical ailments? You may be wondering about whether marijuana can be legally used for medical purposes. Here are the facts:

- \* Several states have passed medical marijuana laws allowing persons to use marijuana for certain medical conditions. However, the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved marijuana to treat any disease or medical ailment. Under federal law, marijuana is classified as an illegal drug with no approved medical use.
- \* Marinol® is a synthetic form of THC, the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana. The pill form of Marinol® has been approved by the FDA to treat nausea in cancer chemotherapy patients and to stimulate appetite in some patients with AIDS. It is available only through a prescription.

## Find Out for Yourself

For more information on marijuana and the long-term consequences, visit these websites:

### **Just Think Twice – Marijuana**

<http://www.justthinktwice.com/drugs/marijuana.html>

### **NIDA for Teens – Marijuana**

[http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/facts\\_mj1.php](http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/facts_mj1.php)

### **and Marijuana: Facts for Teens**

<http://www.nida.nih.gov/MarjBroch/marijteenstxt.html>

### **TeensHealth™ – Marijuana**

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/drugs/marijuana.html#cat20140](http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/marijuana.html#cat20140)

### **Above the Influence – Marijuana Facts (Pot, Weed)**

<http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/facts/drugsmarijuana/>



## Tobacco and Alcohol – A Continuing Problem

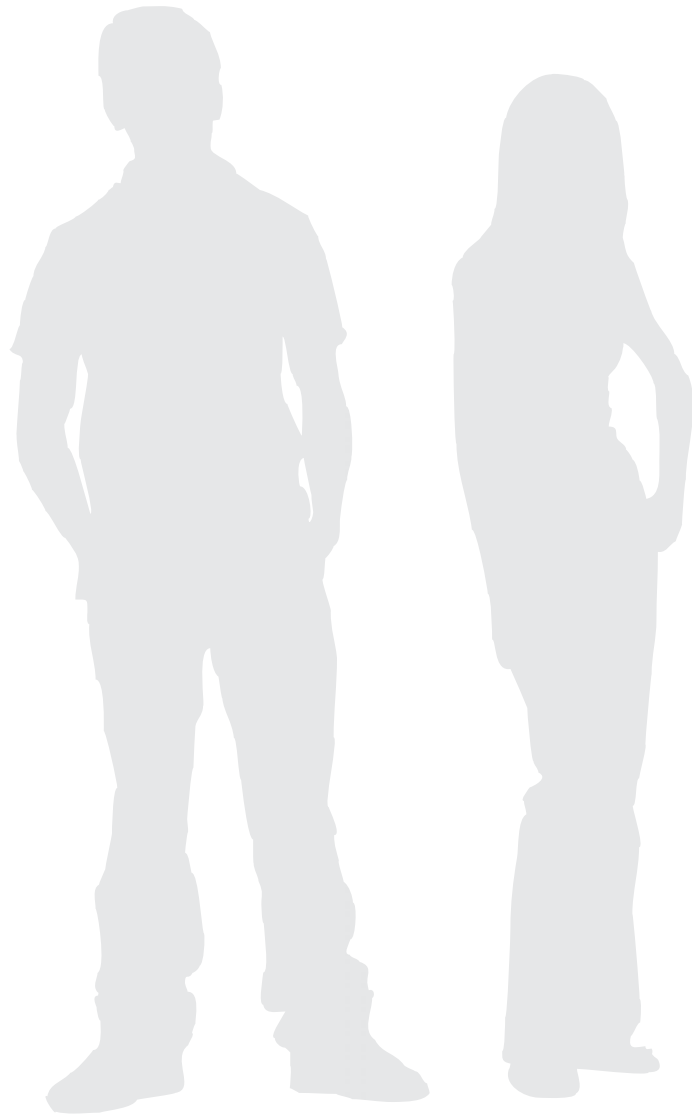
We decided to do some research on the continuing problem of tobacco and alcohol abuse among teens, and we found some interesting facts:

### **TOBACCO**

- \* Many kids who start using cigarettes and smokeless tobacco when they are teens are addicted by the age of 20.
- \* Nicotine – the ingredient found in tobacco – is as addictive as heroin or cocaine. It gets absorbed in the lungs and moves into the bloodstream and is circulated through the brain.
- \* The tar found in cigarettes increases a smoker's risk of lung cancer, emphysema, and bronchial disorders. Smokeless (chewing) tobacco can cause damage to gum tissue and even lead to loss of teeth.
- \* In recent years, there has been an increase in teen use of water pipes – called “hookahs” – to smoke specially-flavored tobacco. Hookah also is known by the names narghile, argileh, shisha, hubble-bubble, and goza. Many teens consider hookah smoking less harmful than cigarette smoking, but it actually carries many of the same health risks as cigarettes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

### **ALCOHOL**

- \* Most young teens do not drink. According to a national survey on alcohol in 2009, about seven out of 100 13-year-olds reporting having drunk in the past month, which means that 93 percent did not drink. If you choose not to drink, you are not alone.
- \* Alcohol slows down the body and mind. It may make someone feel less tense or anxious initially, but it also impairs coordination, slows reaction time, and impairs vision, clear thinking, and judgment.
- \* Drinking heavily can cause alcohol poisoning. When people drink too much, they become addicted to alcohol – this is called alcoholism or alcohol dependence. It's a disease and can happen at any age, even in the teen years.
- \* Alcoholism is a disease with the following symptoms: craving (a strong need to drink); loss of control (not being able to stop drinking); physical dependence (with withdrawal symptoms such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety); and tolerance (the need to drink greater amounts to get high.)



## What Makes Drugs So Harmful?

What we didn't know before we started is all the ways that drugs are bad for you – and that many teens are in complete denial about the risks involved. We found out that even trying drugs one time can cause you to do something risky you wouldn't normally do. Teens are particularly at risk because drug use can affect how your brain develops. We'll find out more about this, but let's start with a quiz to see what you already know:

### How Much Do You Know?

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| 1) Drugs interfere with the brain's communication system. | T or F |
| 2) Drug use can lead to long-term changes in the brain.   | T or F |
| 3) Drugs affect different people in different ways.       | T or F |

1) true; 2) true; 3) true

# TOP 10 K JUNK R ERW U J and the Teen Brain

We all did our research on this one, and what we found out is pretty frightening. So here are our top 10 things we want you to know about drugs and the teen brain:

1. **Brain Development** – The teen brain is undergoing many critical changes. It doesn't finish growing until we're in our early 20s. While research is still being done, science has clearly shown that using drugs (or alcohol or nicotine) can interfere with the development and lead to long-term changes in the brain.
2. **Impact on Learning** – Drugs affect a person's cognitive function. Teens who are using drugs are less able to do well in school, sports, and other activities. They can't think clearly, listen well, or make good decisions – all of which affects their ability to learn in school.
3. **Early and Repeated Use** – The long-term changes in the brain that result from drug use are worse the earlier and longer the brain is exposed to them. The earlier people start using drugs, the more likely they are to become addicted or have serious consequences.
4. **Long-lasting Effects** – Drugs affect the brain because they are chemicals and work by tapping into its communication system and interfering with the way nerve cells normally send, receive, and process information. Some drugs can change the brain in ways that last long after the person has stopped taking the drugs. This is more likely when a drug is taken repeatedly.
5. **Can't Predict the Effect** – Many drugs can do damage to the body's central nervous system. But everyone's brain and body chemistry are different. This means that you can't predict the effect that a drug can have on you – especially if it's the first time you try it, and even if it's a small amount or dose.
6. **The Feeling of Being "High"** – Different drugs do different things. But they all affect the brain – that's why users feel high, low, speeded up, slowed down, or see things that aren't really there.
7. **Brain Pleasure Meter** – Drugs that are abused can flood the brain's circuit with dopamine, a neurotransmitter in the brain that controls movement, emotion, cognition, motivation, and pleasure. Repeated drug use can reset the brain's pleasure meter, so that without the drug, you feel hopeless and sad. Eventually, everyday fun stuff like spending time with friends doesn't make you happy anymore.
8. **Worst-case Scenario** – Using drugs can lead to addiction, serious health problems, and even death.
9. **Lack of Judgment** – Addiction to a drug happens with some persons when the brain changes and drives the person to seek out and use drugs regardless of the cost or consequences. Addictions can cause people to do things that they would not otherwise choose to do, including stealing, having sex, losing friends, family problems, or other physical or mental problems brought on by drug use.
10. **Drugs Control the User** – When someone's addicted to drugs, that substance becomes the most important thing in that person's life – causing major problems at school, work, and home. People addicted to drugs don't control their lives; drugs do.



*The chances of becoming addicted to marijuana or any other substance differ from one person to the next. Around one out of 11 people who use marijuana become addicted, for example. Could that one person be you or one of your friends?*

– 2010 Monitoring the Future Survey

## R W H O P R H R H V E V J U J

If you have a friend or classmate you believe may be doing drugs, there are definitely signs that you might notice. Here are a few signs of drug use we uncovered in our research:

- Changing friends
- Mood changes or emotional instability
- Having a dry mouth or excessive thirst
- Messy, careless appearance
- An unexpected change in school performance (or declining grades)
- Loss of interest in school activities, hobbies, or sports
- Being more secretive about belongings or activities
- Changing the type of clothing worn
- Evidence of drug paraphernalia (pipes, rolling papers)
- Evidence of inhaling products (hairspray or glue) or accessories (paper bags or rags)
- Bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils

### Think about It

Your brain can help you solve problems, be creative, be logical, make plans, make wise decisions, and you need it working properly to do every single thing in your life. All parts of the brain work together to keep you healthy and happy, and it's a very complex piece of machinery. Is it worth it to experiment with drugs when the outcome is potentially so serious? Drug abuse just makes things worse in the long run and doesn't help the problems that led to its use. So the bottom line is – it's best to never start using drugs in the first place.

## It Could Happen to You

Your friend Shonda offers you a ride home from school with her older boyfriend Darvin. You say “yes,” because Shonda really likes him and he seems like an okay guy. But while he’s driving you home, Darvin starts smoking a joint – and you’re completely shocked. Shonda joins him and passes it to you. You just shake your head to say “no,” but now you’re worried about Darvin’s driving and about getting stopped by the police.

### ? What Would You Do?

What could you say to Shonda and Darvin about smoking marijuana while driving? What are some ways to let them know that it’s not okay with you as a passenger to be in a car whose driver is doing illegal drugs?

### Teens Weigh In

“Me and my friend were goofing off and sniffing permanent markers because they smell good, then suddenly, I felt really dizzy. I almost fainted. I also had a headache after. I then found out that you could die smelling an inhalant your first time. I didn’t even know I was doing inhalants, but I did a little research and found out that permanent markers do count as inhalants. I’m glad I wasn’t hurt by this experience – and I know I’ll never do that again.”

– Teens Ask Teens, [JustThinkTwice.com](http://JustThinkTwice.com)



## Group Activities



**Video Diaries** – Watch the short documentary called “In Their Shoes” on the CheckYourself™ website to see interviews and video diaries of teens sharing their perspectives on drug use (<http://checkyourself.com.Videos.aspx>). Discuss how the opinions and views of the teens on the video are similar to or different from the views of your small-group members.

**Truth or Consequences** – You’ve learned about the physical, psychological, and emotional effects of drugs on teens. But what about the consequences in someone’s life if they are abusing drugs regularly? Brainstorm in your group a list of short-term negative consequences that result from abusing drugs. What kinds of losses does a teen experience by being addicted to drugs – things like getting poor grades, being thrown off a team, losing friends, etc.? Then brainstorm a list of long-term negative consequences teens might encounter later in life – things like not being able to go to college or having to work in a pizza restaurant forever.

**Imagine That** – What are some of the most obvious signs of drug addiction? Are there other signs that may not be obvious to family and friends? What are the physical signs of drug addiction? Review the way marijuana affects the brain – especially the five senses, heart rate, emotions, memory, and judgment. Then discuss the consequences for people in various professions – such as airline pilot, doctor, truck driver, attorney, construction worker, or politician. How would their behaviors be affected by marijuana use?

## Reality Check

Sarah, 17, abused a variety of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, including Xanax®, OxyContin®, and cough syrup. One morning, after a night of taking prescription drugs and drinking, her friends awoke to find her unconscious with vomit coming out of her mouth. She was rushed to the hospital where doctors pronounced her dead.

– Ben Montgomery, “She Died After a Night of Partying,” *Seventeen.com* (March 2007), [http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/\\_downloads/pdf/Seventeen-Rx-Article.pdf](http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/_downloads/pdf/Seventeen-Rx-Article.pdf)

## Find Out for Yourself

Check out these sites for more on short-term effects and long-term consequences of drug use:

**Just Think Twice – Facts & Fiction: Know the Difference**

[http://justthinktwice.com/content/facts\\_and\\_fiction.html](http://justthinktwice.com/content/facts_and_fiction.html)

**TeensHealth™ – Drugs: What You Should Know**

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/drugs/know\\_about\\_drugs.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/know_about_drugs.html)

**NIDA for Teens – Real Stories**

<http://nidateens.demo2.iqsolutions.com/stories/>

**Scholastic – HeadsUp: Real News About Drugs and Your Body**

<http://headsup.scholastic.com>



## REASONS TEENS USE DRUGS

### The Truth Behind the Hype

We learned a lot about different types of substances teens use – and both the short-term and long-term consequences of drug use. But we were curious about the reasons teens have for using drugs – why do some teens choose to do something that’s so obviously harmful to them? Why are young people tempted – or pressured – to start using drugs in the first place and why do they keep using them? So we set out to find the truth behind the “hype.” But, before we tell you what we learned, check out what you already know about teen drug use.

#### How Much Do You Know?

- 1) Kids use drugs because they don’t know how they will affect them. T or F
- 2) Many teens believe drugs aren’t that dangerous. T or F
- 3) The media often portrays drug use as more common than it is. T or F
- 4) The reasons for teen drug use are as complex as teens themselves. T or F
- 5) Some teens see drugs as part of normal teen experimentation. T or F

1) true; 2) true; 3) true; 4) true; 5) true

# TOP 10 Reasons Teens Use Drugs

It turns out that *all* of the statements in the quiz are true. The reasons teens use drugs are as varied and as complex as teens themselves – there isn't one single reason. In our research, though, we learned that there are some common factors related to teen drug use. Here are the top 10 reasons teens use drugs:

1. **Desire to change the way they feel** – Teens who use drugs think they'll experience euphoria or an artificial "high" they can't feel naturally.
2. **Escape school and family pressures** – Young people often don't have good coping strategies for stress, and they believe drugs will help them escape or cope with daily pressures and challenges.
3. **Low self-esteem or low self-confidence** – Youth who haven't developed a positive regard for themselves can believe that drugs will help them overcome their insecurities and feel more socially confident with others.
4. **Seeking acceptance by peers** – Teens want to make friends, fit in, and be accepted – and they sometimes believe that they'll be left out if they don't use drugs.
5. **Wanting to create an image** – Some youth believe that using drugs will make them appear adult or sophisticated – or even dangerous or "edgy."
6. **Being bored** – Teens believe that drugs give them something to do, something that doesn't require transportation, just a place to hang out.
7. **Thinking there's no risk involved with drugs** – Teens downplay the risks of drug use, thinking that the dangers aren't that great or won't affect them personally.
8. **Easy availability of drugs** – Youth today have easy access to many different kinds of substances – over-the-counter medications, inhalants, prescription drugs at home, or drugs available through the Internet.
9. **See other people using drugs** – Youth are exposed to people, in the media and even in their own lives, who use drugs and other substances – and this gives them the impression that drug use is acceptable and "normal."
10. **Rebellion** – Some teens see using drugs as a way to "get away with something," bonding with others who also are opposed to the rules of school, work, and parents.



- ✓ Teens experiencing **high stress** are twice as likely to smoke, drink, get drunk, and use illegal drugs as those who aren't stressed.
- ✓ Young people who are **frequently bored** are 50 percent more likely to smoke, drink, get drunk, and use illegal drugs than teens who aren't bored.
- ✓ Teens with **\$25 or more a week in spending money** are nearly twice as likely to smoke, drink, and use illegal drugs as those with less – and they are twice as likely to get drunk.
- ✓ Among teens aged 12 to 17 years, those who spend time on social networking sites (like Facebook or MySpace) are five times as likely to use tobacco, three times as likely to use alcohol, and twice as likely to use marijuana as teens who do not spend any of their day on social networking sites. (*National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XVI: Teens and Parents*, August 2011, study conducted by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University).

## Think about It

Take a look at the list of reasons teens use drugs. Do you notice anything they all have in common? What is it that's *really* behind these motivations or reasons? Who or what are these teens listening to? And who or what are they not listening to?

What we noticed is that many of the reasons involve going along with others. We know the need to feel accepted is hard to resist, but is it worth it to go along when the result is physical harm? Isn't it better to be one who chooses not to go along with the crowd – and stands out because of it?

Some of the reasons also have to do with avoiding something or checking out. The truth is, drugs don't solve anything in the long term – they simply hide feelings and problems. And when a drug wears off, the feelings and problems are still there and they usually become worse – because drugs can ruin every aspect of a person's life.

## It Could Happen to You

One day, on your way home from school, you see Brandon and catch up with him. He's someone you've wanted to be friends with for a while, so you ask him to stop and have coffee. When you stop for coffee, Brandon pulls out some white pills and offers one to you. "I got these from my parent's medicine cabinet, and they'll make you feel great. My brother takes them for ADHD and I use them all the time and can even do my homework better with them. Do you want some?" You want Brandon to like you, so you take one of the pills. You feel happy right away but then begin to shake all over. You don't like the feeling at all. And you don't sleep that night either.

### ? What Would You Do?

What could you say to Brandon when he offers you the pills? What are some ways to say "no"? And, if Brandon is your friend, what could you also say to him to help him realize that drugs are a bad idea?

Are there times when you've agreed with friends or decided to "go along" just to "get along"? How did these decisions feel at the time? How did they feel when you thought about the situation afterwards? And what about the times when you made your own decisions and chose for yourself? How did it feel to say what you really wanted?



### Teens Weigh In

"I think some teens do drugs because they want attention. I know kids who do it just because they think they'll be cool and everyone will want to be like them! I, for one, don't see why they think that because they're only hurting themselves and that's just plain dumb. Please don't do drugs - it won't make you cool, it will only hurt you!"

- Teens Ask Teens, JustThinkTwice.com

## Group Activities



**Anonymous Teen Survey** - If you have friends or classmates at school who have tried drugs or other substances, or use them regularly, they probably won't want to talk to you about why they do and, in most cases, they may not even be aware of their reasons. With your group, create an anonymous survey to find out more about why teens use drugs. Try SurveyMonkey® ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) or another online survey tool to help you create the survey (see "Education Survey" or "Market Research Survey" for how to model questions).

**Response Team** - Brainstorm in your group 10 responses or comebacks to the "Top 10 Reasons Teens Use Drugs." For example, what's the truth behind teens' belief that using drugs is a way to "get away with something?" Is it worth it to do something harmful and dangerous as a way to rebel against parents or other authorities? Who really gets hurt in this scenario?

**Truth Behind the Hype** - You've learned about several different types of drugs and substances that young people use - marijuana, inhalants, prescription drugs, and over-the-counter medicines. For each of these drug types, pinpoint the specific motivation or reason a young person might have for using that drug. Then, do a web search to find out the truth about the effect that drug really has.

## Reality Check

"When I was 11 years old, my older brother, who was very popular in school and someone I looked up to, introduced me to drugs. I began smoking marijuana - at first, only about three times a month. Then it was two times a week. By the middle of sophomore year, I was using daily and by junior year, it was multiple times a day. After an injury that kept me from competitive gymnastics, I had to find something else to give my time to . . . something that would help me meet new friends. It wasn't until junior year that I got caught at school with drug paraphernalia. I was sent to an alternative school, and eventually went into a drug-treatment facility. I'm now 17 and eight months into my journey back to recovery. The hardest thing for me is remembering what life was like before I started using drugs."

- Parents: The Anti-Drug



## Find Out for Yourself

Check out these sites for more on why teens use drugs – and responses to these reasons:

### **Just Think Twice – Facts & Fiction**

[http://justthinktwice.com/content/facts\\_and\\_fiction.html](http://justthinktwice.com/content/facts_and_fiction.html)

### **TeensHealth™ – Drugs: What You Should Know**

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/drugs/know\\_about\\_drugs.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/know_about_drugs.html)

### **NIDA for Teens – Real Stories**

<http://nidateens.demo2.iqsolutions.com/stories/>



## Pressure From All Directions

When our team began this assignment, one of the biggest challenges was deciding what was fact and what was fiction. One of the first things we realized as we did our research was that there was a lot of information about drugs and drug use featured on TV, YouTube, Facebook, other websites, in movies, on the radio, in books and magazines, and in daily conversation with friends. Some of the information is accurate, but a lot of it is not. Yet teens get their information from so many different sources – and they usually assume this information is true. Before we talk about the many different influences and pressures on teens, here's a brief quiz:

### **How Much Do You Know?**

- 1) Parents have no control over whether their teens abuse drugs. T or F
- 2) The U.S. culture portrays drug use as normal and acceptable. T or F
- 3) All information on drug use presented on the Internet is accurate. T or F

1) false; 2) true; 3) false

# TOP 10 Influences on Teens

Teens experience pressure from all directions – friends and classmates, the wider culture, TV and movies, music, the entertainment and sports industry, the Internet. All of the frequent references to drug abuse from these sources make it seem more widespread, more “normal,” and more socially acceptable than it actually is. For teens, these are important sources of information, so it’s easy to believe what we see and hear – but most teens are not aware how influenced they are by these prevalent images. You’ll probably want to learn more about this through your own research, but here are what we found to be the top 10 influences on teens when it comes to drug abuse:

1. **Peer Pressure** – The first time a teen uses a substance to get high, it’s likely to have come from siblings or friends. It may be someone the teen trusts and looks up to, it may be a group of peers a teen wants to fit into, or it may be antagonistic peers who bully a teen into doing something he or she doesn’t want to do. We’ve all heard about peer pressure and, when it comes to drugs, it’s a big factor.
2. **Culture of Drugs** – Our culture often presents drug-taking in a positive light, and there is not nearly enough accurate portrayal of the serious consequences of drug use.
3. **Negative Role-Models** – Celebrities, entertainers, and sports figures talk publicly about their drug use, conveying a message that taking drugs is normal and acceptable.
4. **Prevalence of Medication** – People in the U.S. today take so many medications, believing there’s a pill for everything.
5. **Music** – Many songs that kids listen to – especially rap songs – talk about drug use as a common, everyday occurrence.
6. **Social Networking Sites** – Teens who frequent social networking sites like Facebook regularly see messages about drugs – and they witness other teens trading information about using illicit substances without getting caught.
7. **Movies** – Many of the most popular movies watched by teens have frequent references to drugs or alcohol, violence, and other risky behaviors.
8. **Advertising** – Teens see countless messages – both in print and on TV – advertising the benefits of drugs and medications.
9. **Internet** – Teens can find information on any kind of drug online and, even though much of the information is inaccurate, teens use it to make decisions about drugs to try.
10. **Parental Attitudes and Behaviors** – When parents (or caregivers) themselves use or abuse alcohol or other drugs, their teens are more likely to use drugs, to use them early in their lives, and to become dependent on them.



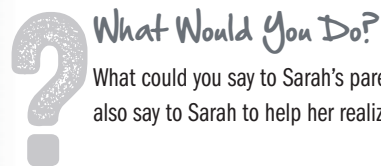
- ✓ A study of more than 10 million online messages written by teens in the past year shows that they regularly talk about drinking alcohol, smoking pot, and partying.
- ✓ Another study used a computer program to search blogs, public chat rooms, message boards, and other places that attract teens – the study found that about two percent of the posts explicitly mentioned drugs or alcohol.

## Think about It

We’re all inundated with messages from hundreds of sources every day – through music, ads, TV, movies, the Internet, and even from our friends and families – and most of the time we aren’t even conscious of these messages. When it comes to drug use, it’s important to think about it: Where is the message coming from? Do you trust this source? Is there a hidden agenda that has nothing to do with you? What is the point of view of the person sending the message? Do you agree with that point of view? The more you evaluate the messages you hear, the more you will be able to understand the various influences in your life. You’ll be able to make up your own mind about what you want to do, and you won’t have to believe the hype.

## It Could Happen to You

You spend the night at your best friend’s (Sarah) house. When you and Sarah go downstairs in the middle of the night to get something to eat, you see that her parents are in the living room, and they’re smoking pot. They see you and ask you if you want to try some. You’re shocked, because you’ve known Sarah and her parents since you were really little, although you’ve always noticed how they seem spacey and absent-minded all the time. You don’t know what to say because you don’t want to insult them. You weren’t really interested in smoking pot, but her parents make it seem okay, like just another activity for the family to do together.



## What Would You Do?

What could you say to Sarah’s parents? What are some ways to say “no?” And, what could you also say to Sarah to help her realize that drugs, even marijuana, are a bad idea?

## Teens Weigh In

“When someone offers me drugs, there are different responses use, Like ‘No, I’m not into that,’ or just a simple ‘No thanks’ does it. I’ve learned that the less you say and the faster you move on to the next subject, the quicker it gets them off your back. If they ever persist in pressuring me, I’ll be more forward and say, ‘Seriously, drop it, I don’t want any.’”

– Teens Ask Teens, JustThinkTwice.com

## Group Activities

**Video Diaries** – Watch the short documentary called “In Their Shoes” on the CheckYourself™ website to see interviews and video diaries of teens sharing their perspectives on drug use (<http://checkyourself.com.Videos.aspx>). Discuss how the opinions and views of the teens on the video are similar to or different from the views of your small-group members.



**Online Quiz** – Visit the website of the National Youth Anti-Media Drug Campaign (<http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/influence/pressuredquiz>) to take a quiz on peer pressure and drugs. See how the answers of all the members of your small group compare to one another.

**Rap Session** – Discuss contemporary music and its frequent references to drug use – such as the lyrics to the Placebo song, “No hesitation, no delay. You come on just like Special K. Just like I swallowed half my stash. I never ever want to crash.” Do you think this music simply reflects behaviors and attitudes already present in the culture? Or do you think these forms of entertainment influence how teens think and behave? Do you think these songs are realistic or give the impression that drugs are more widely used and accepted than they actually are?

## Find Out for Yourself

Check out these sites for more on why teens use drugs – and responses to these reasons:

**Just Think Twice – Facts & Fiction: Know the Difference**

[http://justthinktwice.com/content/facts\\_and\\_fiction.html](http://justthinktwice.com/content/facts_and_fiction.html)

**TeensHealth™ – Drugs: What You Should Know**

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/drugs/know\\_about\\_drugs.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/know_about_drugs.html)

**NIDA for Teens – Real Stories**

<http://nidateens.demo2.iqsoptions.com/stories/>



## Reality Check

“Many kids have their first encounter with drugs and alcohol through someone in their family or a close friend. That’s how I got started. I was 12 and hanging out with some older cousins during a family vacation. I wanted to be cool like them, so when they offered me a hit of marijuana, I took it. For about three years, I only smoked pot when I was with my cousins. But then I started high school and found myself smoking pot every day. I could make a simple cell phone call and instantly have access to drugs. My parents didn’t have a hard time figuring out I was regularly smoking weed . . . my clothes, my hair, my room all smelled of it. They immediately had me meeting with counselors and often screened me for drugs. Now I’m 17 years old and four months into treatment. I’m doing much better now and getting my life back in order.”

– Parents: The Anti-Drug



## MAKING GOOD PERSONAL DECISIONS

### *Standing Up to Pressures*

We know that peer pressure – and all the other pressures teens face – can be powerful and challenging. That's why it's important for you to think beforehand about the kinds of decisions you want to make and figure out how to stand firm in those decisions. We want to share with you some of what we've learned about reasons not to do drugs.

# TOP 10 Reasons NOT to Use Drugs

There are a lot of reasons teens decide to use drugs – but there are so many more reasons not to use drugs. In our research, we identified the 10 top reasons:

- 1. Drug Use is Illegal** – Abusing drugs is illegal in ALL 50 states and the District of Columbia, and if you get caught you may have trouble with the police, sheriff, or other law enforcement authorities.
- 2. Health Problems** – Drugs and alcohol are toxic to the body and can cause things like liver and kidney failure, rapid heart rate, tremors, and irregular respiration.
- 3. Loss of Future Potential** – Not only is drug abuse illegal and the cause of many health problems, it also can result in the loss of future potential. Drug abuse makes it difficult to get a job – since many jobs require pre-employment drug testing – and it's even more difficult to keep a job if concentration, motivation, alertness, coordination, and other necessary skills are negatively impacted by drug abuse. Losing a job as a result of drug abuse can permanently harm your chances for long-term success.
- 4. Time and Money** – Abusing drugs are a big waste of time and money. Many drug abusers or addicts will spend hours seeking and using drugs – and will be able to do little else in the meantime. Many drug abusers also spend all the money they earn just to keep getting more drugs, and some will eventually resort to borrowing, stealing, or selling drugs in order to have enough to keep their addiction going.
- 5. Decreased Performance in School** – Teens who turn to drugs often find themselves doing poorly in school. Without meaning to, teens who experiment with harmful substances tend to devote their time and energy to the drug, which means things like studying for school are considered unimportant.
- 6. Behavioral Problems** – Drugs can change a teen's personality. Instead of being easygoing or hardworking, drugs can make a person angry, bitter, and aggressive. This can impact a teen's relationships with parents, teachers, and others in authority.
- 7. Crime and Violence** – Along with behavioral problems can come run-ins with the law. Teens on drugs may steal to support their drug habit or they may become involved with violence because of their use of certain drugs.
- 8. Lack of Good Judgment** – Someone who is high tends to have poor judgment when it comes to deciding if they should or should not do something. Driving under the influence of alcohol or marijuana, or getting into fights are examples.

## Teens Weigh In

“Don't take other's paths in life – walk your own.”

– Your Words, Abovetheinfluence.com

- 9. Increased Risk for Addiction** – Someone who tries drugs or alcohol as a teen is more likely to have substance abuse problems as an adult.
- 10. Lack of Self-Respect** – Teens who use drugs eventually lose their self-respect because the drug takes over his or her entire life and becomes a crutch.

## O IN JERUS E KREHV

Resisting peer pressure starts with making your own choices. Life is all about making choices, so it's important that you learn how to make them for yourself – without being influenced by everyone around you. There are simple steps to take when you make an important decision:

- Identify the options – What are the choices in this situation?
- Think through each option carefully – What are the consequences of each option?
- Make a decision – Which option seems best for you?
- Evaluate your decision – How did it feel to make the decision you did?

If you take the time to decide what you want, and why you want it, you'll be better prepared to say “no” when facing a challenging situation. What are the steps for resisting peer pressure?

- Say no firmly.
- Make eye contact.
- Say how you feel.
- State your reasons if you want to (but this is optional).
- Stand up for yourself.

## Think about It

The idea of making your own choices sound easy, but sometimes it isn't. What are the situations in your life when you find it a challenge to make a choice? What is it about that choice that presents such a problem? Is there spoken or unspoken pressure about what someone else wants you to do? Thinking about these questions before a situation arises makes it easier to respond appropriately when you're in a difficult situation that calls for a decision.

## It Could Happen to You

You're walking in the park at dusk and you see a bunch of your friends breathing into paper bags. They wave you over and say, "This stuff is wacked - you have to try it. And the best part is it's legal. All you have to do is go to the store and get some spray paint or cleaning fluid or glue." You notice that they all have paint marks on their faces from sniffing it from the bag. You know you don't want to do this, but all of them are doing it - you don't know what to say.

## ? What Would You Do?

What could you say to this group of friends? What are some ways to say "no?" And, what could you also say to them to help them realize that drugs are a bad idea?

### Group Activities

**Your Life Now and in the Future** - Write a story about your life now and another detailing the future you envision. How might drug use/abuse impact your vision? Consider the short- and long-term consequences of drug use and how these would derail your future plans. Compare your stories with those of your small-group members and discuss how positive choices now can help you get where you want to go.

**Interactive Story** - Work with your small group to create an interactive story in which each member plays a different role. Your story should depict a teen faced with several important decisions related to possible drug use. Create one story in which the teen decides to use a drug or substance, and another in which she does not. You may want to make a YouTube video of the stories.



### Teens Weigh In

"I stay as far away as possible from drugs, but there've been times when I've been put into a situation where drugs were around. But I had no desire to try them or let anyone break me down to try them. You have to stay strong and be true to yourself. You know what's right and wrong for yourself. And, the best thing to do if you're being pressured is to say 'NO!' If you still struggle with being pressured, you may need to find a group of different people to hang out with. There's always an opportunity to remove yourself from a situation like this. Just stay strong and don't let anyone break you down! :]"

- Teens Ask Teens, [JustThinkTwice.com](http://JustThinkTwice.com)



### Reality Check

"How did I get started doing drugs? I met an older guy, who asked me if I wanted to get high one day. So I did. We hung out regularly, and as you'd expect, my drug use became more frequent. Pot became my drug of choice. I was visiting a lot of chat rooms, and guys would IM me asking if I drank or got high. I didn't think too much about giving them my cell phone number. We'd end up meeting to get high or mess around with prescription drugs. When I wasn't hanging out in chat rooms, I was posting stuff to my MySpace profile. I lied about my age and posted pretty seductive pictures to attract guys. Most were between 16 and 25 years old, I was only 14. Of course, I attracted the "druggie" types because my profile page was filled with talk about smoking and drinking. I dug the attention and acceptance! But the drugs really took a toll. I was rushed to the hospital three times for drug abuse. I couldn't stop, though. I would skip school for fear of missing out on something. I equated fun with drugs, and drugs with meeting people. Because my mom was working all the time and my dad was out of the picture, it was pretty easy to get away with a lot of the stuff. It wasn't until I refused to go to school that my mom put me in treatment. I'm seven months into it and glad to be recovering."

- Parents: *The Anti-Drug*

## Find Out for Yourself

Check out these sites for more on why teens use drugs – and responses to these reasons:

### **Just Think Twice – Facts & Fiction**

[http://justthinktwice.com/content/facts\\_and\\_fiction.html](http://justthinktwice.com/content/facts_and_fiction.html)

### **The Truth About Drugs – Some Good Reasons Not to Take Drugs**

<http://www.saynotodrugs.org.uk/reasons-not-to-take-drugs>

### **Abovetheinfluence.com – Comebacks for When You're Feeling the Pressure**

<http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/influence/comebacks>



## SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT DRUG PREVENTION

### What Can You Do?

Now that you're aware of the risks and consequences of drug use, you're prepared to make good decisions. You're also prepared to play an important role in drug awareness and prevention – sharing what you know with various audiences: your parents; a mentor; your siblings; your peers; elementary-school kids; school organizations; or community-service groups.

# TOP 10 Ideas for Prevention Activities

We want to share some ideas for activities you can do with your friends to help educate your community and school about drug prevention. These activities are a way of teaching drug information and also getting the community and school involved in drug-free activities. You can have fun with your friends without doing drugs or drinking. Some possible events are:

1. **Presentation** – Get on the agenda of your local school board, city council, or county commission meeting to make a five-minute presentation about why the prevention team chooses to live drug free.
2. **Living Drug-Free Chain** – Have students and teachers write a positive statement on a red chain link about “Living Drug Free.” The chain links are linked together to form a red “Living Drug Free” chain that is displayed in the hallways around the school.
3. **School Event** – Create a drug-free message and perform during a school pep rally or half time show during a sporting event.
4. **Media Contest** – Conduct a media contest and have students create a video, rap, song, poem, etc. that delivers a “Living Drug Free” message.
5. **Lecture Series** – Partner with local radio and/or TV station to air “Living Drug Free” messages or a lecture series with guest speakers (law enforcement, DEA special agent, physician, nurse) who can speak on a variety of anti-drug topics. The lecture series may also be broadcast through the school.
6. **Service Announcement** – Arrange to have a brief anti-drug service message that contains a drug fact during daily school announcements. Ask the school principal, teachers, local celebrities, coaches, and mayor to participate in your anti-drug campaign. These messages may be pre-recorded for increased participation by non-school representatives.
7. **Special Event** – Organize a special event such as a basketball 3 on 3 tournaments (for boys and girls) at a local school, park facility, or community center and invite the local law enforcement to share information with students. Include some sort of entertainment such as a school or community band to kick off the pre-activities. If enough funds are raised or a nominal fee is charged for participation, winners may receive trophies with the inscription “Living Drug Free.” During the tournament, have stations or one main information table where students can learn about the effects of using and abusing drugs.
8. **School Posters** – Make posters to post around the school with information on drugs.
9. **Newsletter Column** – Have a “Drug Facts” column in your school newsletter or announce them as part of the school announcements on the intercom system.
10. **Writing, Music, or Art Contests** – Organize a contest for the school or community that gives participants a chance to have fun, educate others, and build interest in the importance of drug prevention.

## Think about It

If more and more teens begin to be aware of the very serious consequences of drug use, there'll be fewer kids who get sick, die, or become addicted to drugs. So spreading the word is an important part of drug prevention. Take a look at the many options for spreading the word about drug prevention? Which ones appeal to you the most? Which do you think you'd be particularly effective in carrying out?

## It Could Happen to You

You're at a party with a few friends and, at one point, you don't see anyone you came with. You go into the bathroom, and all of them are there, taking some prescription painkillers a classmate gave them. They automatically expect you to join them, but you don't want to – and now you don't know how you're going to get home because the guy you rode with (Mike) has already taken two pills. You sure don't want to get into a car with him if he's high on painkillers.

## ? What Would You Do?

What could you say to these friends when they offer you the pills? What are some ways to say “no?” And, if they are your friends, what could you also say to them to help them realize that drugs are a bad idea?





## Teens Weigh In

“My best friend and I made a promise when we were younger to keep each other safe. During our sophomore year, she started dating guys who tried to get her to drink and do drugs with them. I watched as my best friend became a whole different person – someone I didn’t know. I tried talking to her, but the responses I got were always the same: hollow regrets and empty promises. It was tearing me up to watch her destroy herself, so I did the only thing I knew would help her. I sat down with her mom and explained what was happening. Her mom, who had seen the change as well, was very upset to finally know the truth, but she got her some help. My friend was pretty mad for a month, but ultimately apologized and told me how much she appreciated what I did for her. Sometimes the best love is tough love.”

– Teens Ask Teens, *JustThinkTwice.com*

## Group Activity

**Video Role Models** – Watch the video called “Helping a Friend” on the Above the Influence website about teens helping their friends with drug problems (<http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/speak/videos>). Discuss what you and your small-group members would do to help a friend with a drug problem, and compare your responses with the teens in the video.



## Reality Check

“I never thought it could happen to me. Becoming addicted to inhalants was not my plan. Although a lot of teens feel as though they have problems, mine were rooted in something that wasn’t my fault: abuse. Shortly after my 13th birthday, an older kid in the neighborhood who knew I was struggling offered me some weed. I thought it would help. It really seemed as though getting high was helping me forget my problems. But, soon I needed more drugs to get high. That’s when I began huffing, inhaling various household products to get high. I inhaled almost anything I could get my hands on – computer cleaner, air freshener, spray paints. I enjoyed huffing because it was cheap, an easy high to obtain, and in 20 minutes my high would be gone so no one would know. Inhalants took up so much of my time, thoughts and energy that I didn’t realize my life was getting totally out of control. Huffing was becoming a big problem, and an everyday occurrence. Eventually, I couldn’t hide it anymore, and my parents sent me to treatment for my huffing addiction.

I recently celebrated my 15th birthday, as a sober, healthy high-school student and to be honest, staying sober can be challenging at times. An important lesson I learned was that my ‘friends’ who I used to get high with only liked me when I was high. I also realized that I didn’t like me when I was high.”

– Megan Hakeman, “Addicted to Inhalants,” *CheckYourself™* website

## Find Out for Yourself

Check out these sites for more on why teens use drugs – and responses to these reasons:

### Just Think Twice – Facts & Fiction

[http://justthinktwice.com/content/facts\\_and\\_fiction.html](http://justthinktwice.com/content/facts_and_fiction.html)

### TeensHealth™ – Drugs: What You Should Know

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/drugs/know\\_about\\_drugs.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/know_about_drugs.html)

### NIDA for Teens – Real Stories

<http://nidateens.demo2.iqsolutions.com/stories/>

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

*Check out these activities and field trips that will help you learn more about drug prevention, the consequences of drug use, and ways to help spread the word about awareness to other teens.*

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## What is the DEA?

### Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

Tough job, vital mission . . . these words have special meaning in our complex world. Even though the Drug Enforcement Administration has been around since 1973, many people aren't familiar with the agency's responsibilities, mission, and impact on Americans' day-to-day lives. From Colombia to Afghanistan and from Los Angeles to New York, DEA agents, investigators, analysts, chemists, lawyers, and support staff all work together to make sure drug traffickers are brought to justice.



### What does DEA do?

The DEA provides drug-prevention information to schools, drug-free coalitions, and communities. It also works with state and local law enforcement agencies to dispose of unwanted and unused prescription drugs. It finds links between terrorists and drug traffickers, and tracks drug finances through international banking systems. DEA also uncovers meth labs throughout the U.S.

### What Is DEA?

DEA was created in 1973 as the nation's top federal drug law enforcement agency. Today, the agency has evolved into a modern and sophisticated organization of men and women dedicated to keeping our nation safe from drug trafficking and drug abuse. DEA is in every major city within the United States, and has foreign offices in more than 60 countries around the world. To see where DEA's offices are located, go to [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov).

DEA enforces the country's federal drug laws by investigating and prosecuting individuals who grow, manufacture, or distribute drugs within the United States and those who bring drugs into the United States from foreign countries. DEA also tracks down individuals who "divert" drugs from the legal market—mostly prescription drugs—and follows drug-related money that traffickers try to hide.



## Interview with a DEA Special Agent

Jessica decided to learn more about the job of a Special Agent. She interviewed Special Agent David Jones about his job at the Drug Enforcement Administration.

**Prevention Team:** What is a Special Agent?

**SA Jones:** DEA Special Agents are a group of qualified men and women from diverse backgrounds who are very committed to their job as federal drug law enforcement agents in the United States and in 63 countries all over the world.

**Prevention Team:** How does this job differ from that of a local law-enforcement officer?

**SA Jones:** Local law-enforcement officers and agencies attend to hazards related to public safety – identifying, pursuing, and arresting suspected criminals, resolving problems with the community, and enforcing traffic laws. DEA Special agents enforce laws and regulations relating to illegal drugs at the national level.

**Prevention Team:** How long have you worked as a special agent?

**SA Jones:** I have worked for DEA, the world's leading drug enforcement agency, for 10 years. DEA offers great opportunities for those interested in contributing to the well-being of the American public and other people throughout the world.

**Prevention Team:** What are your job responsibilities as a Special Agent?

**SA Jones:** We enforce the controlled-substance laws and regulations of the United States. We bring to justice organizations and their members tied to terrorism, who are involved in the growing, manufacture, or distribution of illegal drugs.

SA Jones also explained the other types of occupations that are available at DEA:

*Diversion Investigator:* They are responsible for keeping the legal drug industry, medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists on track, making sure they follow the federal drug laws.

*Chemists:* They are responsible for analyzing the drugs that special agents seize in drug raids.

*Intelligence Research Specialists:* Their role is similar to detectives. They track people's illegal drug activity and study drug trends to find who is using specific drugs.

## Activities and Field Trips

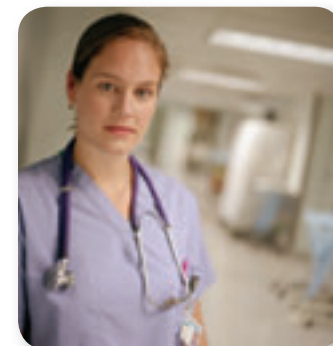
### Emergency-Room Visit

By interviewing individuals working in healthcare, you can get information about the facts and effects of drug abuse from those who've seen it first-hand. When you approach these individuals to set up an appointment for an interview, it's a good idea to explain what school or group you represent, what your team is doing to learn the truth about drug abuse, and what you hope to gain through the interview.

Some youth who use prescription drugs end up in the emergency room with an overdose or serious health effects. Visit a local hospital ER and interview the emergency room nurse or physician to find out how many kids aged 21 and under came in the last month with a drug-related health problem.

We've come up with a few questions to get you started, but you can think of others.

- What were the signs and symptoms of a drug overdose?
- What was the main prescription drug that kids used when they overdosed?
- What other drugs beside prescription drugs are kids using?
- What medical care did the kid receive?



### KEEP IT FROM THE KID

Interview a pharmacist at your local pharmacy or drug store and ask what the pharmacy is doing to keep kids from abusing cough medicines and OTC drugs. When you approach a pharmacist to arrange an interview, don't forget to explain what school or group you represent, what your team is doing to learn the truth about cough medicines and OTC drugs, and what you hope to learn through the interview.

Here are a few questions you might ask:

- Where do you keep the non-prescription cough and cold medicines?
- Why can you buy some cough medicines without a prescription?
- Do you have a limit on the amount of cough medicine a person can buy?
- How do you keep track of the quantity a person buys?

## Activities and Field Trips continued

### School Research

Learn how the drug issue affects your school by conducting an informal study with administrators and staff. If your research involves interviews or surveys, explain to participants what school or group you represent, what your team is doing to learn the truth about drug abuse in school, and what you hope to learn through the interviews. Here are some ways to get started on your school research:

- Interview your school principal or assistant principal to find out how many drug-related suspensions and expulsions occurred in the past year and how many of these were for the four different types of substances you're exploring.
- Talk to the school nurse, counselor, or school resource officer to find out what the primary drug issues are – and what officials are doing to address this issue.
- Review the Student Handbook to find the school's policy on a drug offense. What does the policy say about students using marijuana or other drugs at school or at a school event? Selling or giving marijuana to other students? Based on what you find, decide whether you think the policy should be updated.

### Guest Speakers

Inviting guest speakers to your group is a great way to hear from individuals who have seen first-hand the impact of drug abuse. Possible speakers include an emergency-room nurse, a police officer, or a substance-abuse counselor.

You might also call the local Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) office or contact another law-enforcement office in your community or state and ask to have someone come to your school to talk about drug abuse among teens.

Once someone agrees to speak to your group, be sure to prepare with the following steps:

- Study the topic, reviewing the agency or organization's website.
- Prepare questions you want to ask the speaker.
- Arrange a space for the speaker and audience members.
- Decide who will introduce the speaker, pass out materials, take notes, etc.



## Red Ribbon Week

Celebrate Red Ribbon Week  
U J U K H W R D H H V F N J W



Red Ribbon Week is the nation's oldest drug prevention campaign that is celebrated annually. It all started with one man. The event started as a grassroots tribute to a fallen hero, DEA Special Agent Enrique (Kiki) Camarena, who was murdered by drug traffickers in 1985. Kiki was very concerned about the drug problem in this country, and wanted to make a difference by helping the people that he cared about. Red Ribbon Week started in 1985 in Kiki's hometown of Calexico, California. The event soon gained momentum across California and then the rest of the country as hundreds of people pledged to lead drug-free lives in honor of Camarena's sacrifice. The event was formalized in 1988 when President and Mrs. Reagan served as the Red Ribbon Week honorary chairperson. Every year thousands of schools across the country celebrate Red Ribbon Week the last week of October.

**Activity 1:** Hold an assembly or forum during Red Ribbon Week that helps your peers understand the dangers of drug abuse. Invite a local physician, alcohol/drug abuse counselor, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Special Agent, sheriff, to talk about the dangers of abusing drugs and the drug problem in your community.

**Activity 2:** Design and give out a pamphlet on different drugs that are abused in your community. If inhalant abuse or marijuana is the problem in your community, research the issue and make that the subject of your pamphlet. Make the pamphlet available on your school's website. You may find assistance from a community anti drug coalition, the Elks Club or other community organization to print copies.

**Activity 3:** Coordinate a "Living Drug Free" pledge campaign in your local middle school. Give small tokens (pencils, buttons, pens, etc.) to those who sign up for the pledge and keep track of the number of pledges on a thermometer. Promote the drug free campaign with decorations and posters throughout the school.

**Red Ribbon Patch Initiative:** DEA has created the Red Ribbon Week Boy Scout and Girl Scout Patch initiative to encourage and support Scouts who have earned a patch for learning about the dangers of drug abuse and performing anti-drug activities in celebration of Red Ribbon Week. The three basic requirements include:

1. Each Scout unit must sponsor a Red Ribbon Week activity in their community.
2. Each Scout must attend an anti-drug educational session.
3. Each Scout must agree to sign a drug-free pledge.

For more on the Red Ribbon Patch check the DEA website: [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov).

# Drug Prevention Resources

## Federal Government Agencies

### **Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)**

The main mission of the DEA is to dismantle the major drug-trafficking organizations. It is also committed to reducing the demand for drugs through prevention and education activities. DEA's Office of Demand Reduction works with special agents across the United States to provide drug-prevention information to communities on drug trends and the dangers of using illicit drugs.

<http://www.dea.gov> (general website); <http://www.justthinktwice.com> (for teens);  
<http://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com> (for parents)

### **National Guard**

The National Guard's Counterdrug Program's mission is to use the National Guard's resources to help create the best opportunity for America's youth to make the decision to be drug-free. The National Guard works with local law-enforcement, education, and community-based organizations to reduce the chances of exposure of illegal drugs to our nation's children.

<http://www.ngbcounterdrug.ng.mil/>

### **National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), Impaired Driving Division**

This division has resources for driving, including information on investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of cases involving impaired driving. The NHTSA uses a three-pronged strategy: 1) high-visibility law enforcement with supporting communication campaigns; 2) enhanced prosecution and adjudication; and 3) medical screening and brief intervention for alcohol-abuse problems.

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Impaired>

### **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)**

NIAAA provides leadership in the national effort to reduce alcohol-related problems.

<http://www.niaa.nih.gov>

### **National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)**

NIDA conducts research and disseminates the results of research programs about the effects of drugs on the body and brain.

<http://www.nida.nih.gov>

### **Office of National Drug Control (ONDCP)**

ONDCP reports directly to the President, oversees the substance-abuse budgets of all the federal agencies, and develops the President's National Drug-Control Strategy each year. ONDCP administers the Youth AntiDrug Media Campaign and the Drug-Free Communities Program.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp>  
<http://www.abovetheinfluence.com>

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**

SAMHSA is responsible for overseeing and administering mental-health, drug-prevention, and drug-treatment programs around the nation. The agency is made up of three centers: the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP); the Center for Mental Health (CMH) and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT).

<http://www.SAMHSA.gov> (general website); <http://store.samhsa.gov> (free publications)

### **U.S. Department of Education (ED)**

The Office of Safe and Healthy Students provides grants for drug- and violence-prevention programs that promote the health and well-being of students in elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

<http://www.ed.gov> (general website)  
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/> (information on specific funding for programs)

## Non-Federal Prevention Resources

### **American Council for Drug Education (ACDE)**

This is a substance-abuse prevention and education agency that develops programs and materials based on the most current scientific research on drug use and its impact on society.

<http://www.acde.org>

### **Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR)**

CESAR's mission is to inform policymakers, practitioners, and the public about substance abuse, its nature and extent, its prevention and treatment, and its relation to other problems.

<http://www.cesar.umd.edu>

## Drug Prevention Resources continued

### **Community Antidrug Coalitions of America (CADCA)**

CADCA is an organization whose purpose is to strengthen the capacity of community anti-drug coalitions to create and maintain safe, healthy, and drug-free communities.

<http://cadca.org>

### **Drug Strategies**

This is a drug- and alcohol-addiction treatment website dedicated to providing the best resources for fighting substance abuse.

<http://www.drugstrategies.org>

### **Elks Awareness Program**

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks has a resource center for the Elks National Drug Awareness Program, the largest volunteer drug-awareness program in the United States.

<http://www.elks.org/dap>

### **National Association of Children of Alcoholics (NACOA)**

The mission is to eliminate the adverse impact of alcohol and drug use on children and families.

<http://www.nacoa.org>

### **National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)**

As a private nonprofit organization, NCPC's mission is to help families and their communities keep safe from crime. The organization sponsors a public-education campaign involving 1,600 crime-prevention professionals.

<http://www.ncpc.org>

### **National Drug Court Professionals (NDCP)**

NDCP is the national membership organization for public, drug-court, DWI-court, and mental-health court professionals, including justice system, alcohol and drug treatment, and mental-health treatment professionals.

<http://www.nadcp.org/>

### **National Inhalant Prevention Coalition (NIPC)**

NIPC serves as an inhalant-referral and information clearinghouse, stimulates media coverage about inhalant issues, develops materials, and provides training and technical assistance.

<http://www.inhalants.org>

### **Partnership at Drugfree.org (PDFA)**

The Partnership at Drugfree.org is a nonprofit organization that helps parents and caregivers prevent, intervene in, and find treatment for drug and alcohol use by their children.

<http://www.drugfree.org>

## Youth Organizations

### **Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA)**

The mission of Boys & Girls Clubs of America is to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

<http://www.bgca.org>

### **D.A.R.E. – Drug Abuse Resistance Education**

D.A.R.E.'s primary mission is to provide children with the information and skills they need to live drug- and violence-free lives.

<http://www.dare.com>

### **Students against Destructive Decisions (SADD)**

SADD is a peer leadership organization dedicated to preventing destructive decisions, specifically underage drinking, other drug use, impaired and risky driving and teen violence and suicide. It is a peer-to-peer youth-education, prevention, and activism organization with thousands of chapters in middle schools, high schools, and colleges.

<http://www.sadd.org>



inhalants  
amphetamines  
methadone  
barbiturates  
prescription drugs  
spice  
fentanyl



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS  
OF AMERICA