

Alcohol & Drug Trends in School Age Children



Alcohol Trends

I know that this is not our first Newsletter covering Alcohol & Drug Trends in School Age Children. But I believe that through constant research and education we can prevent possible future problems. Junior high is a critical time in a child's life, especially when it comes to underage drinking and alcohol abuse. When children reach this stage in their lives, they are more susceptible to giving in to peer pressure and experimenting with risky behaviours. Research shows that most children who become drinkers start in middle school. In fact, one out of two 8th graders has tried alcohol.

Conversation starters

- *Do you know that it is illegal to drink before you are 21?*
- *What do you think would happen if you were caught drinking by the police?*
- *There is research that shows that drinking before age 21 changes your brain. What do you think about that?*

The most common types of alcohol among junior high school-age children is beer. However, it's been reported that children have also filled water bottles with vodka and other clear spirits, and have experimented with pocket shots (alcohol in a bag), Alco pops (flavoured alcoholic drinks) and alcohol-soaked candy, such as Gummi Bears.

Approximately 40 % of children will have tried alcohol by the time they reach 8th grade, which can be an introduction to other drugs and dangerous substances. Statistics show that children who drink are 7 times more likely to go on to use an illicit drug, 22 times more likely to use marijuana, and 50 times more likely to use cocaine, compared to children who never drink.

What You Can Do

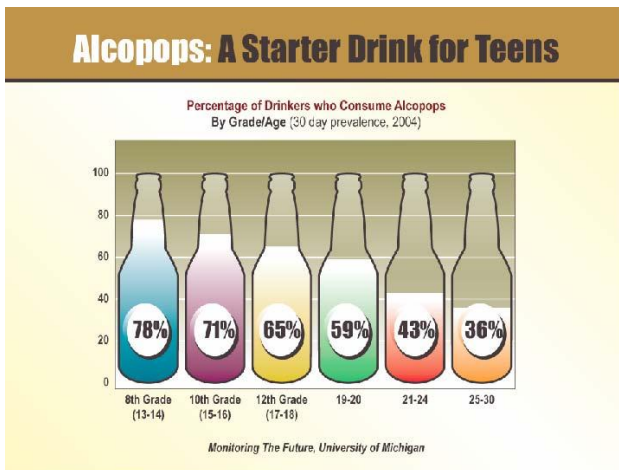
- Spend time together regularly.
- Listen to your children. Try to understand the pressures place on them and don't criticize their beliefs.
- Keep track of where your children are, what they're doing and who their friends are.
- Get them involved in extracurricular activities so they won't be able to just "hang out" with friends after school. This is when children are most likely to experiment.
- Praise or reward them often. If they feel good about themselves, they will

Help your child deal with the pressure to drink by giving them an out. Sit down with them to develop an exit plan they can use when they're in uncomfortable or risky situations.



Possible risks

- **Dependence.** People reported drinking before the age of 15 were four times more likely to become dependent on alcohol at some point in their lives.
- **Illicit drug use.** More than 67 percent of young people who start drinking before the age of 15 will try an illicit drug.
- **Violence.** Children who start drinking before age 15 are 10 times more likely to be in a fight while or after drinking.
- **Poor academic performance.** Children who drink are at a risk for lower grades and absenteeism. Alcohol can interfere with a student's ability to think, making learning and concentration more difficult.
- **Sexual activity.** Teen alcohol use by teens is a strong predictor of both sexual activity and unprotected sex.



- Smell of alcohol on clothes and breath.
- Sudden change in mood or attitude.
- Change in attendance or performance at school.
- Loss of interest in school, sports or other activities.
- Discipline problems at school.
- Withdrawal from family and friends.
- Secrecy.
- Association with a new group of friends and reluctance to introduce them to you.
- Depression and developmental difficulties.
- Alcohol disappearing from your home.

Over the Counter Prescription Medicine Dangers

- 1 in 5 teens has abused a prescription (Rx) pain medication.
- 1 in 5 report abusing prescription stimulants.
- 1 in 10 has abused cough medication.
- On an average day, 2,466 adolescents abuse a prescription pain medication (without a prescription).



Street names:

40, 80, Big boys, blue, chill pills, cotton, french-fries, kicker, pilz, poly drug, oxy, Skittles, tranqs, and trail mix.

Method: Ingested orally.

Dangerous Effects

Opioids can produce drowsiness, constipation and, depending on amount taken, can depress breathing, Central nervous system depressants slow down brain function; if combined with other medications that cause drowsiness or with alcohol, heart rate and respiration can slow down to dangerous levels. Taken in high doses or repeatedly, stimulants can cause anxiety, paranoia, high body temperatures, irregular heartbeat, or seizures (National Institute on Drug Abuse).

The misconception of prescription drugs is that they are safer than illicit drugs. When abused, they can be as addictive and dangerous as illegal drugs. Prescription drugs should only be taken by the prescribed individual and are taken exactly as directed by a medical professional.

Prescription drugs account for the second most commonly abused category of drugs, behind marijuana and ahead of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and other drugs.

What do they look like?

OTC's can be broken down into 4 types:

1. Pain relievers
2. Stimulants
3. Sedatives
4. Tranquilizers

Opioids include

Hydrocodone

Oxycodone

Oxymorphone

Propoxyphene

Hydromorphone

Meperidine

Diphenoxylate

Central nervous system depressants include

Pentobarbital sodium

Diazepam

Alprazolam

Stimulants include

Dextroamphetamine

Methylphenidate

Amphetamines

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse



Signs your child may be abusing:

<u>Painkillers</u>	<u>Sedatives & anti-anxiety</u>	<u>Stimulants</u>	<u>Other signs include</u>
Constipation	Drowsiness	Extreme & sudden weight loss	Deceptive behavior
Depression	Confusion	Agitation	Taking higher doses of medication than prescribed
Low blood pressure	Unsteady walking	Irritability	Excessive mood swings or hostility
Decreased breathing rate	Poor judgment	Insomnia	Increase or decrease in sleep
Confusion	Involuntary & rapid movement of the eyes	High blood pressure	Poor decision making
Sweating	Dizziness	Irregular heartbeat	Appearing to be high, unusually energetic or sedated
Poor coordination		Restlessness	Seeking prescriptions from more than one doctor
		Impulsive behavior	

Source: Mayo Clinic.

Follow the below link for some great information about a prescription medicine that is popular with college kids.

Deserving of Your Attention: Teen Abuse of ADHD Meds

<http://www.thefastertimes.com/pediatrics/2011/10/27/deserving-of-your-attention-teen-abuse-of-adhd-meds/>

