

## ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Today, many people are exposed to the temptation to try alcohol or drugs. Some people experiment for curiosity, kicks, peer pressure, or to escape problems in their lives. Alcohol and drugs can gradually begin to control your daily life. Addiction can sneak up on you!

There has been a national focus on saying “no” to alcohol and drugs. It is important for everyone to know the risks. When used in large amounts, or over a long period of time, or in the wrong combination, alcohol or drugs can kill.

The dangers are:

- **Long-term physical or mental illness**
- **Causing harm to others**
- **Overdose**                      • **Addiction**
- **Accidents**                      • **Death**



**You have a choice about using alcohol or drugs. Sometimes it may be necessary to make a choice for yourself that is different from the choices others make. You, not others, are in charge of your choices.**

Also see PEER PRESSURE, page 34.

You can't be sure how you and your body will react to using drugs or alcohol. Permanent damage can happen at any point - even with the first use of some drugs.

**ALCOHOL** is a liquid drug. It affects all of your body functions. It slows down the heart rate and breathing, and it affects the brain. For example, alcohol can make an angry person more angry, or a sad person sadder.

Alcohol is the most abused drug for all age groups. It is illegal to drink alcohol if you are under 21 years old. One drink can make you fail a breath test.

**WARNING:** Games that involve “chugging” – drinking large amounts in a short time – CAN KILL YOU.

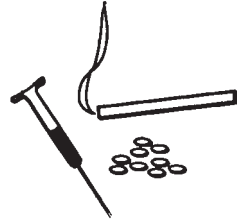
**WARNING:** Mixing alcohol with downers or other drugs is especially dangerous. Wrong combinations CAN KILL YOU.

**INHALANTS** are breathable depressants found in household solvents, aerosol sprays or anesthetic agents. Most are toxic as well as intoxicating, meaning that they can poison you as well as make you high. If you sniff, huff or bag these poisons, you are at risk for three types of harm:

- **ACCIDENTAL INJURY**, because you are more likely to have a serious accident when huffing has impaired your judgment.
- **PHYSIOLOGICAL HARM**, because the active ingredients in most inhalants can cause nausea, fatigue, loss of coordination, changes in pulse and respiration, and even damage the nervous system.
- **DEATH**, because your heart or breathing may stop entirely. Inhalants can kill you the very first time you use them.

**MARIJUANA (Pot)** affects memory and interferes with thinking and coordination. It can cause you to feel depressed and anxious. Marijuana can interfere with feelings, the ability to learn, and decision making. A single joint contains four times as much cancer-causing tar as a filtered cigarette.

**CRACK or COCAINE** is a stimulant. These drugs are especially dangerous because addiction and damage to the body can happen very fast. They can cause heart attacks and sometimes death.



**METHAMPHETAMINE (Meth)** is also known as “crank.” “Ice” refers to its chunk form. It’s a powerful, illegally-produced stimulant that attacks the central nervous system. Using it can quickly lead to nervousness, compulsive behavior, irritability, anger, aggressiveness, hallucinations, paranoia, depression with suicidal tendencies, heart attacks and strokes.

**DATE RAPE DRUGS** include GHB (Gamma Hydroxybutyric Acid), Ketamine, and GBL (Gamma-Butyrolactone). These odorless, colorless drugs are easy to slip into any beverage, and can be used by sexual offenders to cause memory loss (amnesia) or loss of consciousness in their victims.

Advocates for rape victims recommend taking these steps to protect yourself at a party or club:

- **ALWAYS** pour your own beverage, or watch it being poured
- **ALWAYS** keep your beverage with you, and keep it covered with your hand
- **NEVER** drink from an open can if you didn’t open it yourself
- **NEVER** leave your beverage unattended
- **NEVER** let a friend leave with a stranger (even if she seems like she wants to)

**RAVE DRUGS** like Ecstasy induce high energy and lower inhibitions by altering the nerve transmitters in the brain that also regulate mood, memory, pain, perception, and sleep. Because they tend to be produced in makeshift labs, it’s impossible to know exactly what chemicals they contain so their danger level varies each time. But experts know that extended use can cause permanent brain damage. Other adverse reactions include anxiety, depression, panic attacks, and paranoia.

**LOOK-ALIKE DRUGS** are available; the name says it all. You do not know what you are getting.

**NICOTINE** is found in cigarettes, chewing tobacco, snuff, etc. and is as addictive as heroin or cocaine! When you smoke a cigarette, nicotine circulates through your bloodstream and into your brain within 8 seconds. Nicotine can also enter your bloodstream through the mucous membranes that line your mouth (chewing tobacco), or nose (nasal snuff), or even through the skin.

Nicotine reduces your stamina, wrinkles your skin, and dulls your senses of smell and taste. It has even been linked to baldness! More long-term risks include fatal heart attacks, strokes, emphysema and cancer. People who start smoking before the age of 21 have the hardest time quitting, and fewer than 1 in 10 people who try to quit smoking succeed.

Also see SMOKING AND TOBACCO USE, page 54.

**HALLUCINOGENS** such as PCP, LSD or magic mushrooms distort your sense of reality, time and space, and may make you think you're hearing voices, seeing images, and feeling things that don't exist. People on hallucinogens are known to act in irrational, aggressive or violent ways. The effect varies from time to time and person to person, so there is no way to know how much self-control you might lose. Hallucinogens can cause heart and lung failure, put you in a coma, or cause "flashbacks" even weeks, months or years after use.

**STEROIDS** that athletes sometimes take to try to build muscles are called *anabolic steroids*. These are artificial versions of the testosterone that is in all of us (males and females have testosterone!) In guys, anabolic steroids can act directly on the testes and cause them to shrink. This can result in a lower sperm count and reduce your ability to reproduce. Steroids can also cause an irreversible loss of hair on your head. In girls, anabolic steroids can cause your monthly periods to stop, loss of hair on your head, growth of hair on your face, and a deepening of the voice.

You may have heard that doctors sometimes prescribe steroids to reduce swelling. This is true, but these aren't anabolic steroids. They are *corticosteroids*, and when used according to a doctor's prescription, corticosteroids can be useful in treating a medical condition.

**PRESCRIPTION DRUGS** are drugs ordered by a doctor to treat a specific condition. When taken properly under a doctor's care, these drugs can be beneficial. Using another person's medication or using prescription drugs incorrectly is dangerous and illegal. Someone else's stimulants can lead you to have potential heart failure or fatal seizures. Someone else's painkillers or depressants can lead to your death. (And, if you give someone prescription medication that is not prescribed to them, you can be arrested for Delivery of a Controlled Substance.)

**OVER THE COUNTER (OTC) DRUGS** like cough and cold remedies can cause blurred vision, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and coma. There's a particular danger when these drugs are mixed with alcohol or prescription drugs, because the combinations can cause respiratory failure and death.

Alcoholism and chemical dependency are diseases. Like many other diseases they can be passed from one generation to another. If someone in your family has had a problem with drugs or alcohol, it is even more important that you carefully consider your choices. Saying "no" to drugs or alcohol could be the best choice for your own health.

**CHECKLIST FOR ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE**

People whose use of alcohol or drugs creates problems for them may not be able to recognize the problem. The following list of questions can help you determine if your use (or someone else's use) of alcohol or drugs is a problem.

**Answer YES or NO**

Do you or does someone you know:

- Drink/do drugs because of problems? Feeling bad?
- Drink/do drugs when mad at others?
- Find grades or work habits are starting to slip?
- Try to drink/do drugs less and fail?
- Drink/do drugs even when you don't mean to?
- Drink/do drugs in the morning? Before school or work?
- Have blackouts or times when you cannot remember?
- Lie about drinking/drug use?
- Ever get in trouble because of drinking/drug use?
- Think it's cool to drink or get high?

If you answered YES to ANY of these questions, ASK FOR HELP!

**For an alcohol-related or drug-related emergency, get to a hospital emergency room or call 9-1-1.**

For help dealing with alcohol, call:

**Alcoholics Anonymous Hotline . . . . .(715) 279-8897**

Provides meeting times for local 12-step Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. Anyone reaching out for help may leave a first name and number, and a group member will call back. Or, log on to [www.area74.org](http://www.area74.org) and click on "District 8" below the Area 74 map.

For help when a family member or loved one has an alcohol problem, call:

**Alateen . . . . .(888) 425-2666**

A recovery program for young people whose lives have been affected by alcoholism in a family member or close friend. Members apply the 12 Steps to themselves, and help each other by sharing their experience, strength and hope. Call for local meetings.

For help dealing with tobacco use, call:

**Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line . . . . .(800) QUIT NOW**

Or access their website at: [www.ctri.wisc.edu/quitline2.html](http://www.ctri.wisc.edu/quitline2.html)

Also see SMOKING AND TOBACCO USE, page 54.

Help with alcohol and other drugs is also available through:

**Courage to Change Recovery . . . . .(715) 223-0480**

**Family Counseling Services . . . . .842-3346**

These two counseling agencies provide alcohol and other drug abuse counseling for teens, and can offer a special price for families with low income or no insurance.

**Premiere Recovery Outpatient Services . . . . .(715) 848-4555**

Outpatient treatment services to help people with chemical dependencies, on an ability-to-pay basis.

For information about local counseling or treatment for addictions, call:

**United Way's 2-1-1 . . . . .dial 2-1-1 or (715) 848-2255 24 hrs./day**

Or, search the Keyword AODA at: [www.unitedwaymc.org/211.htm](http://www.unitedwaymc.org/211.htm)

Offers information & referral to community services that can help.

For more information about ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS, search the **National Institute on Drug Abuse** website at: [www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov).

For some real-life ideas about making smart choices, check out **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**: [www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov).