

THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE

Countering Common Myths to Inform Prevention and Empower Parents and Caregivers



Isn't teen substance use a rite of passage and part of socializing? Won't all teens use eventually?

NO



FACT

Most teens do NOT use substances.

A growing percentage of youth are making One Choice not to use any substances.¹ In 2021:

64% of high school seniors did not use any alcohol, marijuana, nicotine, or other drugs in the past month

36% did not use any substance in their lifetime



ACTION

Know that youth substance use is **NOT** inevitable. Get informed about local trends. Connect with your local prevention organization. Talk to your kids about their own experiences.

Did Europe get it right with alcohol? Can kids can be taught to drink responsibly?

NO



FACT

Teens in Europe have higher rates of binge drinking.

"In general, countries with lower legal drinking ages have a higher prevalence of adolescent binge drinking compared with countries with higher legal drinking ages."²

"Condoning or encouraging underage drinking only increases the likelihood that a student will drink that much more when they are away from their families."³



ACTION

Set a clear expectation of no use for reasons of health.

Can marijuana/THC improve mental health?

NO



FACT

Coping with mental health challenges as a teen isn't easy. Frequent use of marijuana makes it even harder.

Adolescents who use marijuana are at increased risk of developing depression or suicidality in young adulthood.⁴



ACTION

Help your teen develop healthy coping strategies and talk to a mental health professional.

Is teen substance use harmless? "It's only a few beers" "It's just a little pot" "At least they are only vaping"

NO



FACT

The younger a person starts using substances, the greater the risk of later problems – and for teens, all substance use is connected.

Addiction is a pediatric-onset disease: 90% of adults with a substance use disorder started using before age 18.⁵

Youth age 12-17 who use any one substance (alcohol, nicotine, or marijuana/THC) are dramatically more likely to use the other two and other illicit drugs.⁶



ACTION

Understand that the developing brain is uniquely vulnerable to any substance use.



ACTION

Don't limit conversations about youth substance use to any one drug.

WHEN WE KNOW BETTER, WE DO BETTER

PREVENTING YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE IS A HEALTH PRIORITY

Analogous to other health standards, the goal of youth prevention is **ONE CHOICE**:

no use of any alcohol, nicotine, marijuana or other drugs by youth under age 21 for reasons of health



LEARN MORE

OneChoicePrevention.org

