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## YOUTH, ALCOHOL, & OTHER DRUGS

**Youth & Drug Abuse** - Drug abuse is costly to our society as a whole, but is especially harmful to our youth. Youth's immature physical and psychological development makes them more susceptible than adults to the harmful effects of drug abuse. Behavior patterns that result from teen and preteen drug use often produce tragic consequences:

- Self-degradation
- Loss of control
- Disruptive conduct
- Antisocial attitudes can cause untold harm to juveniles and their families.
- May lead to earlier sexual initiation, unprotected sexual intercourse, and multiple partners.<sup>1</sup>

**Alcohol** - Alcohol is by far the most used and abused drug among America's teenagers.

- Alcohol is a leading cause of death among youth.
- Alcohol contributes substantially to adolescent motor vehicle crashes, other traumatic injuries, suicide, date rape, and family and school problems.
- Children who are drinking alcohol by 7<sup>th</sup> grade are more likely to report academic problems, substance use, and delinquent behavior in both middle school and high school.
- By young adulthood, early alcohol use was associated with employment problems, other substance abuse, and criminal and other violent behavior.
- Nearly one-half (47%) of persons who began drinking before age 14 were alcohol dependent at some point in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup>
- Researchers have known for some time that people who smoke are more likely to drink alcohol than non-smokers. Similarly, smoking is three times more common in people with alcoholism than in the general population.

**Consequences of Substance Use** - Substance abuse by young people can result in health-related problems (including mental health) or death, academic difficulties, risky behaviors, poor peer relationships, and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Youth substance abuse is also associated with an increased risk of suicide.<sup>1</sup> Below are some of the more commonly abused drugs and their possible side effects.

**Marijuana** - Impaired memory, anxiety, panic attacks, symptoms of chronic bronchitis, daily coughs and phlegm, more frequent chest colds, abnormal functioning of lung tissue injured/destroyed by smoke.<sup>1</sup>

**Amphetamines/methamphetamine** - Irritability, insomnia, convulsions, tremors, anxiety, paranoia, aggression, violent behavior, stroke, psychosis resembling schizophrenia, cardiovascular collapse, and death.<sup>1</sup>

**MDMA (ecstasy)** - Depression, anxiety, paranoia, muscle tension, teeth clenching, tremors, increased heart rate and blood pressure, dehydration, hyperthermia, brain damage, and death.<sup>1</sup>

**Inhalants** - Memory loss, learning problems, increased heart rate, distorted perception of reality and spatial relations, lethargy, nausea/vomiting, slurred speech, loss of motor coordination, wheezing, organ and muscle damage, sudden sniffing death syndrome which can cause heart failure, and withdrawal symptoms which can include grand mal seizures.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy, Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse Fact Sheet, "Juveniles and Drugs" 6/03  
[www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov)

<sup>2</sup> [www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov). Copyright 2008

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