

Drug Use in Schools

It is devastating to imagine that your teenager may be abusing drugs. Unfortunately, it is common to find drugs and alcohol in high school, since these substances are so easy for kids to acquire.

Why do teenagers use drugs?

There are countless reasons. Many are reacting to peer pressure and believe turning to drugs and alcohol is how to become popular in high school. Some use drugs to self-medicate from painful feelings. Some teens even turn to study aid drugs like Adderall or Ritalin, because they believe these substances will boost their grades. High school is often the first time that kids encounter illicit substances – and the curiosity can be too much to resist.



Marijuana

In terms of illicit drugs, teens use marijuana the most. More high school seniors smoke pot than smoke cigarettes at this point, and as of 2015, high school seniors are about as likely to smoke weed as they are to drink.

According to experts, around 13% of people who start smoking pot as teenagers become dependent on it. Regular marijuana use can cause a drop in IQ of up to 8 points. Considering that nearly 3,300 teens try weed for the first time every day, it's an undeniable problem that's impacting high schoolers everywhere.

- 35.1% of 12th graders have smoked pot in the past year
- 21.3% of 12th graders have smoked pot in the last 30 days
- 16.6% of 10th graders have smoked pot in the last 30 days
- 6% of 12th graders say they use marijuana every day
- 81% of 12th graders say it would be easy to get marijuana
- Only 32% of 12th graders feel that regular marijuana use is harmful

Effects of Drug Use in School

Consequences of addiction include brain abnormalities, slowed thinking and impaired learning and memory. It can also deplete the brain of certain chemicals like dopamine and serotonin, sending high schoolers into a prolonged depression and leaving them susceptible for more destructive behaviors.

If you notice any signs of addiction, now is the time to **reach out to a professional**. There is help for teenagers on drugs or alcohol, but the longer that substance abuse continues, the harder it will be for your child to recover over the long-term.

Useful links and resources for parents and educators on drug use in schools can be found at <https://www.drugabuse.gov/parents-educators>

