



# FAST FACTS FOR PARENTS: TEEN ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUG ABUSE

The drug landscape has changed significantly since you were a teen – this is what’s happening today.

*The Montgomery County Collaboration Council is a public, private partnership addressing barriers that prevent our children and families from leading healthy and successful lives. The Many Voices Smart Choices Prevention Alliance was developed between Montgomery County Health and Human Services Prevention Office and the Collaboration Council committed to preventing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use by Montgomery County youth.*

**PARENTS:** In order to **have effective conversations** about alcohol & drugs with your children, you need to know the **latest trends in use** so you can share that information.

**KEEP IN MIND:**

1. Substance abuse does not discriminate by grade point average or talent; **EVERY CHILD IS AT RISK.**
2. The brain is not fully developed until age 25, so teen use of alcohol and/or other drugs can have **negative effects of brain development.**
3. The earlier alcohol and/or other drug use begins, the greater the chance that an addiction will develop.

**PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION:** Abuse of, addiction to, & overdose from prescription medications are an **EPIDEMIC** in the US & in Montgomery County. Abuse means the use of medication in a way other than intended, (i.e., without a prescription, taking a higher dose than prescribed, crushing/snorting/injecting a pill form medication).

The most frequently abused medications are:

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION	REASON FOR PRESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES	REASON FOR TEEN ABUSE
Opiates	Pain	Oxycontin, Vicodin, Percocet, Fentanyl, Roxicet, Hydrocodone, Dilaudid, Morphine, Lortab, Demerol	Relax, have fun, forget troubles, deal with pressures/stress of school/home, peer use, & addiction
CNS Depressants	Anxiety / Sleep	Xanax, Valium, Klonopin, Ambien	
Stimulants	ADHD	Adderall, Ritalin, Concerta	

Opiates are **HIGHLY ADDICTIVE & EXTREMELY DANGEROUS.** They are almost the same chemical as **HEROIN.**

- ❖ **Addiction to opiates can start after only a few doses.** Teens become addicted either when they **use opiates recreationally** or when a **doctor prescribes opiates** for injury or surgery. Teens can become addicted **BEFORE PARENTS ARE AWARE.**
- ❖ Opiates tell the brain to **slow or stop breathing**; taking too much can result in **death from overdose.** The amount that causes overdose is different for each person. Overdose from opiates is now the **leading cause of accidental death** in Maryland & across the nation (more than car crashes or gun-related deaths).
- ❖ Prescription opiate addiction often **leads to heroin addiction** because **heroin costs less and is easier to obtain.**
- ❖ There may not be obvious side effects so **use may go unnoticed.** Many users are **highly functioning.** A teen withdrawal from addiction to opiates **may appear to have flu-like symptoms** or claim to be sick frequently.
- ❖ **ADHD medications are abused as study aids.**
- ❖ **Access to prescription medication is easy.** Teens get it from a **medicine cabinet, kitchen counter, purse,** etc. Some teens give away or sell their pills to peers.
- ❖ In Montgomery County, approximately **5%** of middle school & **14%** of high school students have abused prescription medications, & approximately **3%** of middle school & **4%** of high school students have used heroin.

**ALCOHOL:** Under 21 use is dangerous NOT simply because it impairs driving.

- **ALCOHOL**, often the drug of first use, **negatively affects learning & memory.**
- **ALCOHOL impairs judgment and motor coordination** which can lead to falls, fires, risky sexual behavior, rape, assault, criminal activity, property damage, violence, death, & suicide. It can also cause **alcohol poisoning** resulting in brain damage & death.
- In Montgomery County, approximately:
  - **10%** of middle school & **29%** of high school students have one or more drinks frequently. (It is a MYTH that 'everyone' is drinking.)
  - **15%** of high school students have had 5 or more drinks in a row within a couple of hours (binge drinking).
  - **27%** of high school students who have had sexual intercourse used alcohol or other drugs before intercourse.

**THE LEGAL DRINKING AGE IN THE US IS 21.**  
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**Under 21 use is ILLEGAL.**  
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**HOSTING or SUPPLYING to minors is ILLEGAL.**

➤ **Drinking & driving is still a problem.** Approximately **17%** of middle school & **19%** of high school students report riding in a car driven by someone who had been drinking.



**MARIJUANA:** Harmful to teens even though some states have legalized it for medical purpose/recreational use, or decriminalized it. Today, MARIJUANA is up to 10x stronger than in the 80's & can be mixed with other chemicals.

- ❑ **MARIJUANA use is associated with school failure.** It has a **negative effect** on motivation, attention, memory & learning that can persist even after the high is gone. **Heavy teen use** may lead to **permanent IQ loss** (an average of 8 points) by mid-adulthood.
- ❑ **MARIJUANA use impairs driving**, increasing the risk of car crash; risk increases when used with **ALCOHOL**.
- ❑ Use is associated with **mental health** issues (anxiety, depression, psychosis, etc.) & **physical health** issues similar to chronic tobacco use (daily cough, phlegm production, greater chance of lung infections, etc.).
- ❑ **MARIJUANA can lead to the abuse of harder drugs**, particularly when started at a young age.
- ❑ Studies show that **MARIJUANA IS ADDICTIVE: 1 in 6 kids** who ever try it will become addicted.
- ❑ In Montgomery County, approximately **7%** of middle school & **33%** of high school students have used it.

#### **COMMON RISK FACTORS FOR TEEN ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUG ABUSE:**

1. Youth **perception that parents approve** of their alcohol or drug use. *How clear is your message of DIS-approval?*
2. Youth **perception that substances are not dangerous.** *Do they know the FACTS?*
3. Youth **perception that 'everyone else is using'.** *Do they know the FACTS?*
4. **Peers engaging in problem behavior.** *Are friends using alcohol and/or other drugs?*
5. Lack of **parental monitoring** or perception of lack of parental monitoring.
6. **Use by a parent or older sibling** or perception that they are using.
7. **Early behavior patterns.** Risk of use is higher for children who exhibit early & persistent problematic, risk-taking, & high sensory-seeking behavior.
8. Lack of strong parent & adolescent **relationship & family cohesion.**
9. **Access & availability** to alcohol & other drugs.
10. **Poor school achievement** & low school bonding.
11. Some **mental health disorders.**

**TRUST your GUT.**  
**If something doesn't seem right, INVESTIGATE. Seek professional help IMMEDIATELY at the FIRST SIGN of use. EARLY INTERVENTION is CRITICAL.**

#### **ACTIONS FOR PREVENTION:**

**Teen drug use & addiction are caused by a complex set of issues. There are a number of factors that can help protect teens; PARENTS ARE A MAJOR ONE OF THOSE FACTORS. Here are things you can do:**

- ✓ Continue to **learn** about teen alcohol & drug use.
- ✓ Have an **ongoing conversation** (not a confrontation!) with your child about alcohol & drug use. Kids who learn about the dangers of use from their parents are 50% less likely to use.
- ✓ Learn **skills for effective communication** with your teen.
- ✓ **Prevent Access.** Lock up your alcohol & prescription medications. Don't leave medications in the bathroom, kitchen, nightstand, purse or anywhere it can be easily reached.
- ✓ **Dispose of unused & outdated medications.** Practice safe disposal methods (i.e., National Drug Take Back Days).
- ✓ **Seek assistance** from a professional if your child is exhibiting symptoms of underlying mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, or unpredictable moodiness.
- ✓ **Advocate** for evidenced-based prevention programs & self-help groups in your school.
- ✓ **Seek professional help at FIRST SIGN of teen use.** Early intervention is CRITICAL to preventing addiction.
- ✓ **Consider non-addictive forms of pain relief** over opiate medications when needed.
- ✓ **Broaden your child's support network** by engaging in community-based activities & participate as a family.

#### **RESOURCES for drug facts, communication skills, & help beyond prevention (intervention, treatment, & recovery):**

- ❖ **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**, [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
- ❖ **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**, [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)
- ❖ **National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)**, [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)
- ❖ **NIDA for Teens**, [www.teens.drugabuse.gov](http://www.teens.drugabuse.gov)
- ❖ **Partnership for Drug Free Kids**, [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)
- ❖ **Mothers Against Drunk Driving**, [www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)
- ❖ **Heroin Action Coalition**, [www.heroinactioncoalition.com](http://www.heroinactioncoalition.com)
- ❖ **Many Voices for Smart Choices**, [www.manyvoicessmartchoices.org](http://www.manyvoicessmartchoices.org)
- ❖ **Community of Concern**, [www.thecommunityofconcern.org](http://www.thecommunityofconcern.org)
- ❖ **Montgomery County Public Schools**, [www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org)
- ❖ **INFO Montgomery**, [www.INFOmontgomery.org](http://www.INFOmontgomery.org)

**SPREAD THE PREVENTION MESSAGE! Join the Many Voices for Smart Choices Alliance. [www.manyvoicessmartchoices.org](http://www.manyvoicessmartchoices.org)**  
**Membership is open to adults & youth. For more information contact The Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families, 301.610.0147, [Alicia.Church@collaborationcouncil.org](mailto:Alicia.Church@collaborationcouncil.org).**

#### **Data for this flyer obtained from:**

- ◆ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- ◆ National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)/NIDA for Teens
- ◆ Partnership for Drug Free Kids
- ◆ 2013 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey Montgomery County Data