

SPRING 2012



Special points of interest:

- *Postponing the initiation of drinking as long as possible is a worthwhile effort for parents because the younger they start, the greater risk of lifelong addiction.*
- *Although drinking and driving has dropped because teens understand the harm of alcohol on driving safely, teens do not understand how marijuana impairs safe driving.*

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"TODAY'S HEALTHY CHOICES ARE TOMORROW'S HEALTHY OUTCOMES"

Allowing Your Teenager to Drink at Home

Recently, a parent attending one of my substance abuse prevention workshops in a nearby community asked my opinion on allowing her 17 year-old daughter to drink alcohol at home. The mother stated that she was very concerned about her daughter going off to college and becoming very intoxicated for the first time without any parent supervision.



The mother hoped that under her watchful eyes, her daughter would learn that alcohol consumption in large quantities can make her very sick. Perhaps she could even teach her daughter to drink responsibly. Then when

her daughter is a college freshman, she will not participate in typical binge drinking activities.

Postponing the initiation of drinking as long as possible is a worthwhile effort for parents.

The question is, does this practice work as a deterrent? Does allowing your teenager to drink freely at home deter them from getting drunk outside of the home?

It is impossible to say whether this parenting practice is beneficial for any individual adolescent but the science tells us that it will not work for the majority of teens. Numerous research studies show us that maintaining strict rules and

consequences about underage drinking is most protective against teen alcohol use. Parents who use harm-reducing strategies such as allowing their high school teens to drink under their supervision, have a higher risk of those teens getting drunk outside of the home without parental permission than teens who are not allowed to drink at home.



Also, allowing your teen to experience alcohol in high school with parent supervision does not reduce alcohol use at college. Studies of college freshman show that heavy drinking occurs with a majority of students regardless of whether they started drinking alcohol in high school.

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For more information on how parents and school professionals can use campaigns to reach youth, please visit:

www.teens.drugabuse.gov

www.toosmartostart.samhsa.gov

www.thecoolspot.gov

www.drugs4real.com

www.abovetheinfluence.com

www.JustThinkTwice.com

www.the84.org

HEALTHY OUTCOMES



Marijuana impairs time and depth perception. Things appear to be going slower than they actually are. It is difficult to judge distance.

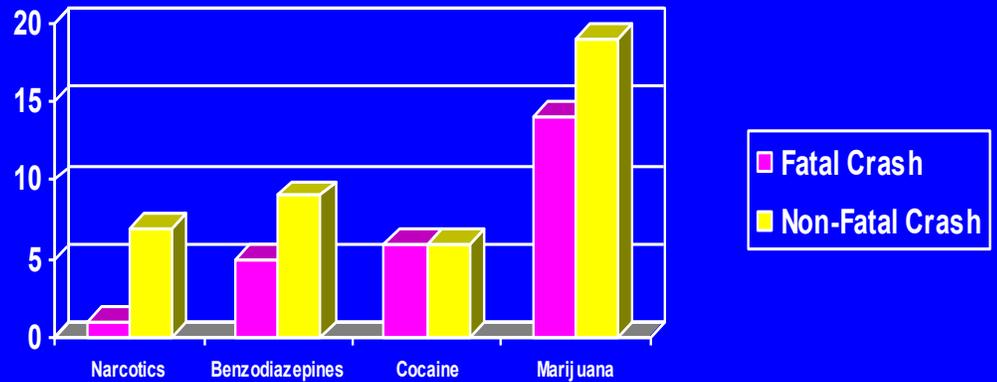
This rising trend in marijuana use by teenagers is likely due to confusion over states that legalized "medical marijuana", the comparison of legalizing marijuana with the end of alcohol prohibition, and the way marijuana use is depicted in movies and television.

Is Your Teen Driving High?

According to a recent study reported in USA Today, nearly one in five of teens say they have driven a car after smoking marijuana.

The national study of 2,300 11th- and 12th-graders was completed by Students Against Destructive Decision (SADD) and showed that more and more teens do not see driving while high on marijuana as a problem. Although drinking and driving has dropped because teens understand the harm of alcohol on driving safely, teens do not understand how marijuana impairs safe driving.

According to a study done by the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA), marijuana causes more fatal and non-fatal car accidents than any other drug except for alcohol. A marijuana-impaired driver perceives that the vehicle is moving slower than the actual speed and can not judge distance effectively. Therefore the driver can not tell how much time or space they have to stop the vehicle safely.



Average Percent of Drug-Impaired Drivers in U.S. (NHTSA)

After more than a decade of decline, teen marijuana use is increasing because there is a decrease in the perception of harm of marijuana. According to the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), high school students currently smoking marijuana dropped from 31% in 2001 to 26% in 2007 but rebounded up to 27% in 2009. And the percentage of high school students in Massachusetts that have ever smoked marijuana in their lifetime dropped from 50% in 2001 to 41% in 2007 but is now rising again to 43% in 2009. (2011 data has not yet been released.)

This rising trend in marijuana use by teenagers is likely due to confusion over states that legalized "medical marijuana", the comparison of legalizing marijuana with the end of alcohol prohibition, and the way marijuana use is depicted in movies and television shows.

With all this misleading information, how can parents talk with their teens about marijuana use?

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According to a recent study, “National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XVI: Teens and Parents” done in August 2011 by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA), parents fail to appreciate the relationship between social networking sites and the risk of teen substance abuse.



That certainly does not mean that every teenager who visits Facebook daily or Tweets with every breath will abuse drugs and alcohol. If that were true, we would all be in big trouble. Most parents are also members of these social networking sites. Some started out joining these sites to keep an eye on our young teens, “creeping” as they call it. But most of us stayed online because it was fun to reconnect with old friends from high school and look at family vacation pictures.

For the first time the survey asked teens,

“In a typical day, how many hours do you spend on Facebook, Myspace or other social networking site?” The goal was to look for any connection to underage drinking and drug use.

The results showed that compared to teens who do not spend time on a social networking site in a typical day, teens who do are:

- Five times likelier to have used tobacco (10 % vs. 2%)
- Three times likelier to have used alcohol (26 % vs. 9%)
- Twice as likely to have used marijuana (13 % vs. 7%)

So why is this happening?

1) Social Networking Exposes Teens to Pictures of Other Teens Using Drugs and Alcohol.

51 percent of teens who spend time on a social networking site in a typical day have seen pictures of teens getting drunk, passed out or using drugs on these sites.

2) Teens Viewing Such Pictures at Increased Risk of Substance Abuse.

Compared to teens who

have never seen pictures of kids getting drunk, passed out or using drugs on social networking sites, teens who have seen such pictures are:

- Three times likelier to have used alcohol (35 % vs. 12 %)
- Four times likelier to have used marijuana (21 % vs. 5%)

So how can we make our teens’ online experience safer?

We may never be able to shield our kids from every harm in life, but we can prepare them. Have a discussion about this with your adolescents. Chances are, they are so de-sensitized by what they see that they will not feel seeing drug or alcohol-related pictures is a big deal.

But it is still useful to have a general discussion about what they might see online. Pictures of other teens drinking or doing drugs can make your teen think that “everyone is doing it”. And if they want to fit in, they will be more tempted.

Statistics show that 80% of teens do NOT abuse prescription drugs, 84% of Massachusetts teens do NOT smoke cigarettes regularly, 58% of MA high school students do NOT drink alcohol, and 63% of MA high school

“Parents Fail to Appreciate Relationship of Social Networking to Teen Risk of Substance Abuse” -The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA)

students do NOT smoke marijuana.

Seeing is not always believing. Pictures on Facebook can be misleading. Parents can help teens to understand that what they see online does not reflect the majority of their peers.



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NEWSLETTER**

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Is Your Teen Driving High? (cont. from page 2)

It is best to stick with the facts:

- Medicinal Marijuana- The FDA has never passed marijuana as medicine. The American Medical Association also does not consider marijuana as a medicine. They officially stated that more research needs to be done before they will approve marijuana as medicine. But if they approve it one day, they said it will never be in a smoked form because smoking is harmful and unhealthy. It would likely be in a slow-release pill or patch format.
- Co-Occurring Disorders- Numerous medical studies show a strong connection between marijuana use and teen mental disorders such as anxiety and depression. The adolescent brain is more vulnerable to cannabis-related mental illness than the adult brain. Weekly marijuana use doubles the risk of depression and anxiety in teens while daily users have five times the risk of these mental disorders.
- Drugged Driving- Marijuana causes more car accidents than any other drug besides alcohol. Driving under the influence of marijuana is illegal. "DUI" means driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. If parents are firm about not tolerating drinking and driving, they should be equally firm about driving while high.

The best news is that parents can have a strong influence on preventing marijuana use. Studies show that parental monitoring and involvement in the lives of preteens and early teens will reduce the risk of later teen use of marijuana by 70%. Also, the longer parents can postpone marijuana use, the less chance their teens will have trouble with dependency, anxiety and depression. Show your teens how much you care by getting involved with the local prevention coalition. These simple steps can reduce teen marijuana use.

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Allowing Your Teenager to Drink at Home (continued from page 1)

So the next question is, why bother trying to prevent high school drinking if it has little effect on college drinking?

It is well documented that underage drinking increases risk of adult alcohol disorders. In fact, the younger a person starts drinking alcohol, the greater that risk. Therefore, postponing the initiation of drinking as long as possible is a worthwhile effort for parents. The more years we can postpone the start of drinking, the more protected our children are from a lifelong alcohol addiction.

The last question is, how do parents postpone the onset of drinking?

Parental communication about their disapproval of underage drinking has been proven to help reduce the risk. Studies show that parents who are "soft" on teen drinking, are more likely to have teens who drink heavily.

Another factor that has been shown to decrease college freshman drinking is internal or "Intrinsic Motivation". This is self-motivation driven by interest and enjoyment rather than external pressure, threat of punishment, or reward such as good grades, a trophy or money. The stress and pressure from external forces can actually drive heavy drinking. But one's internal desire to achieve helps us to make healthier choices.

So encourage your teens to do their best at the activities they enjoy. Help them find areas of study that they are passionate about. Guide them in making goals for the future that excite them because postponing underage drinking is a worthwhile effort.