

ARE YOU PREPARED TO HELP YOUR
TEEN MAKE GOOD DECISIONS?



STATS, FACTS & TALKING POINTS
ABOUT ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS
PARENT ACTION PACK

pad
parent action o^odrugs.org

YOU ARE YOUR TEEN'S MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCE!

You may feel like your teen is tuning you out but, the truth is, they're listening more than you think! In fact, parents have been shown to have an important and growing influence when it comes to teens' use of alcohol and other drugs.

Parents' influence related to drinking has increased significantly over the last 10 years.

In a recent survey 83% of 10 to 18-year-olds said their parents were their leading influence in their decisions about drinking.

When it comes to alcohol and other drug use, having a teen who talks to you can make a world of difference.

How can you make the most of your influence? Research has shown that parents who are warm, understanding and open to negotiating fair limits are most likely to raise socially competent, responsible adolescents.

It makes sense! Teens who feel they can talk to their parents are more likely to share important information about where they're going, what they're doing and who they're with. As a parent, having this information helps you to supervise your teen effectively and decrease the risk that they'll develop problems with alcohol and other drugs. When you keep the lines of communication open, you'll also have more opportunities to guide your teen and share important information with them.

You need information based on evidence, not hype.

It can be hard to separate fact from fiction when it comes to alcohol and other drugs. That's why we've designed this action pack. It will give you up-to-date, research-based information that will allow you to help your teen make better decisions when they're out in the world on their own. For the research behind the stats and facts, visit www.parentactionpack.ca

This action pack will help you to:

- understand how teenagers think,
- get the facts about alcohol and other drugs, and
- prepare yourself to have meaningful conversations with your teen.

UNDERSTANDING WHY MANY TEENS TAKE RISKS WITH ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS



How can your teen be so bright, responsible and thoughtful one minute, and so reckless the next? Before learning the facts and stats about alcohol and other drugs, it's important to understand that there are biological reasons why teenagers don't always make the best choices. It's one more reason why parental monitoring and guidance are so important.

TEEN BRAINS AREN'T WIRED LIKE ADULT BRAINS.

Research done over the past 10 years using magnetic scanners has shown that while the teenage brain is wired to let young people acquire knowledge and skills more easily than adults, the parts that control impulses and planning aren't yet fully developed. This helps to explain why teens are prone to reacting emotionally and impulsively and to taking risks.

TEENAGERS GET A GREATER RUSH FROM USING ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS.

The intoxicating effects of alcohol and other drugs seem to have a greater impact on the reward centres in teenage brains – giving teens more of a rush than adults would get, and making them more likely to take risks. Teens may also be less sensitive to some of the negative physical effects of drinking and using drugs, like hangovers – effects that might help them to keep their drinking in check, or to reconsider it all together.

ALCOHOL: STATS

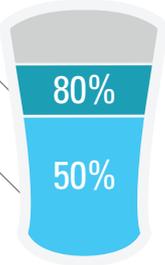


DID YOU KNOW
ALCOHOL IS
THE #1 DRUG
USED BY TEENS?

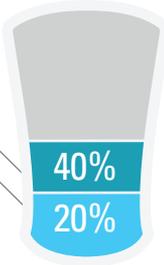
- Over the past ten years, alcohol use by teens has been a good-news/bad-news story. The good news is that young teens are waiting longer before they experiment with drinking, and there have been important decreases in the rates of teen drinking overall. In fact, a quarter of teens who drink report that they limit their alcohol consumption to special occasions.

- But the concern is that when teens do get involved in heavy drinking or binge drinking (defined as having five or more drinks on one occasion) they tend to get themselves into trouble. And the more a teen drinks the greater the risks become.

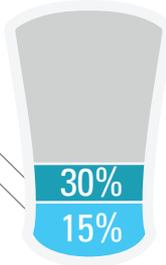
More than 50% of Ontario students in grades 7-12 report having one drink or more in the past year. This rate increases to almost 80% in grade 12.



About 1/5 of students report binge drinking. This number increases to almost 40% by grade 12.



Almost 1/5 of students report drinking at harmful or hazardous levels. By grade 12, this increases to 30%.



DID YOU KNOW THAT GIRLS NEED TO TAKE EXTRA PRECAUTIONS WITH ALCOHOL?

BOYS HAVE CUT BACK ON HEAVY DRINKING, BUT GIRLS HAVEN'T.

Ten years ago female students reported significantly less binge drinking and drunkenness than males. Since that time guys have decreased their heavy drinking – but girls haven't.



GIRLS GET DRUNK FASTER THAN BOYS – EVEN IF THEY DRINK AT THE SAME RATE.

When a girl or woman drinks, the alcohol in her bloodstream reaches a higher level than in a boy's or man's – even if they have similar weights and builds and both drink the same amount. This is because alcohol mixes with body water, and females generally have a higher fat-to-water ratio than males.

FOR THIS REASON, DRINKING GUIDELINES CONSISTENTLY RECOMMEND THAT WOMEN DRINK LESS THAN MEN.

ALCOHOL: FACTS



DO YOU KNOW
THE DANGERS
OF OVERDOING IT
WITH ALCOHOL?

THE MORE A TEEN DRINKS, THE MORE THEY INCREASE THE RISK OF HURTING THEMSELVES OR OTHERS.

THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOL INCLUDE:

- Car crashes – When youth under 19 die in car crashes, more than 50% of the time alcohol is involved.
- Serious injuries – Adolescents have the highest rate of injury of any age group. Alcohol decreases coordination and impairs motor skills, leading to an even greater likelihood of teens getting hurt.

■ **Alcohol poisoning** – When a person consumes too much alcohol over a short period of time, their liver can't process it and alcohol poisoning occurs. It's one of the real dangers of binge drinking. Alcohol poisoning can lead to shallow breathing, irregular heartbeat, dehydration, choking on your own vomit, loss of consciousness or even death.

■ **Risky sexual behaviour** – Drinking can cloud judgement and increase the odds of unsafe sex, an unplanned pregnancy, contracting a sexually transmitted infection or becoming a victim or perpetrator of aggressive physical or sexual behaviour.

■ **Substance use** – Binge drinkers are more likely to use other drugs, like street drugs, over-the-counter drugs, prescription drugs that weren't prescribed for them and high caffeine energy drinks. Adding any drug to the alcohol mix also increases the physical and behavioural risks of drinking.

DO YOU KNOW
THAT CANADA NOW
HAS LOW-RISK
ALCOHOL DRINKING
GUIDELINES?



Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines can help both adults and youth to stay in control and make good choices about their drinking.

Canada now has a set of low-risk drinking guidelines that include a section for teens. These guidelines aren't meant to support underage drinking, but to help reduce harmful drinking. They send a message that lower levels of alcohol intake reduce risks for those who choose to drink – both for teens and for adults.

HIGH CAFFEINE ENERGY DRINKS: STATS AND FACTS

DO YOU THINK IT'S
SAFE TO MIX HIGH
CAFFEINE ENERGY
DRINKS WITH
ALCOHOL?



CAFFEINE CAN CARRY REAL DANGERS.

Children and adolescents are at an increased risk when it comes to the effects of caffeine, yet compared to alcohol and other drugs the dangers of caffeine don't get a lot of attention. While a cola or a cup of coffee isn't likely to do any harm, energy drinks are definitely cause for concern.

THERE ARE UNIQUE CONCERNS RELATED TO ENERGY DRINKS AND TEENS.

- Children and adolescents are at an increased risk of experiencing the effects of caffeine.
- Energy drinks often contain ingredients like guarana that act as stimulants in addition to caffeine.
- 61 adverse drug effects have been reported from consuming energy drinks. Seven of these occurred specifically in adolescents.

50% of Ontario teens (including 1/3 of students in grade 7) report having consumed energy drinks in the past year.



1 in 5 students report having had an energy drink in the past week.

HIGH CAFFEINE BEVERAGES CAN HAVE A SERIOUS EFFECT WHEN MIXED WITH ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS.

Mixing energy drinks with alcohol is dangerous. When a person is impaired by alcohol, energy drinks give them a feeling of greater alertness and improved motor control. They then feel more sober than they really are and are more likely to keep drinking – leading to increased rates of injury, drunk driving, risky sexual behaviour or alcohol poisoning.



DID YOU KNOW THAT 21% OF CANADIAN STUDENTS REPORT MIXING ENERGY DRINKS WITH ALCOHOL?

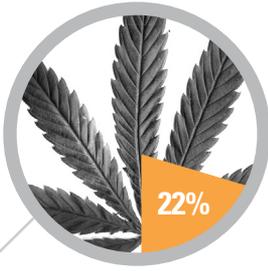
MARIJUANA: STATS AND FACTS



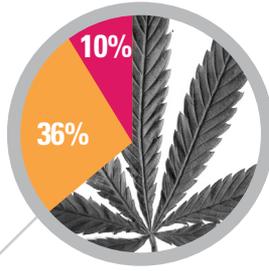
DID YOU KNOW
THAT THERE ARE
LINKS BETWEEN
MARIJUANA AND
MENTAL HEALTH
PROBLEMS?

NEW RESEARCH SHOWS MORE HARMS ASSOCIATED WITH MARIJUANA – ESPECIALLY FOR TEENS.

- Marijuana (or weed) is the most widely used illegal drug in Canada for both adults and youth. In fact, almost half (42%) of Canadians have used marijuana in their lifetime. What some people might not realize is that the levels of the active ingredient, THC, have more than doubled in the last twenty years, and new research has shown that marijuana carries significant health and safety risks, especially for teens.



22 % of Ontario students in grades 7-12 say they've used marijuana at least once in the past year.



By grades 11 and 12, that increases to 36%. One in ten users report symptoms of marijuana dependence.



12% of teen drivers report driving after using marijuana.

FREQUENT USE CAN LEAD TO MEMORY LOSS AND LOWER IQ.

Frequent (daily) marijuana use that begins in the teen years and continues into adulthood has been linked with declines in memory, intelligence and attention – some of which remain even after the person stops using marijuana.

THERE'S AN ALARMING CONNECTION BETWEEN MARIJUANA AND MENTAL ILLNESS.

Links have been made between long-term marijuana use and mental illness. Depression is more common among users (while, at the same time, youth who are depressed are more likely to turn to marijuana, which only worsens the problem). The same is true for anxiety disorders.

What's most alarming, however, is that those who frequently use marijuana during adolescence are significantly more likely to develop psychosis – a severe mental disorder in which thoughts and emotions are so impaired that the person loses touch with reality. Marijuana is also a risk factor for schizophrenia, especially for people who have a family history of the disease.

HAVE YOU HEARD THAT SMOKING MARIJUANA BEFORE DRIVING NEARLY DOUBLES YOUR RISK OF A CAR CRASH?

EVEN OCCASIONAL USE CAN HAVE CONSEQUENCES – ESPECIALLY FOR DRIVERS.

Incidences of impaired driving while on marijuana are common, with 12% of teenage drivers reporting driving within an hour of smoking marijuana – something which nearly doubles their risk of a crash. Marijuana is also the drug that teens combine most often with drinking alcohol. This can have unpredictable physical and psychological effects (like nausea or panic) and can lead to more risk taking.

PRESCRIPTION & OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS:

STATS AND FACTS

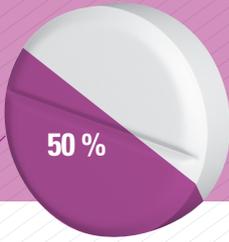
DO YOU KNOW THAT
IT'S RISKY TO TAKE
PRESCRIPTION DRUGS
THAT WEREN'T
PRESCRIBED FOR YOU,
AND EVEN MORE
DANGEROUS IF YOU
MIX THEM WITH
ALCOHOL?



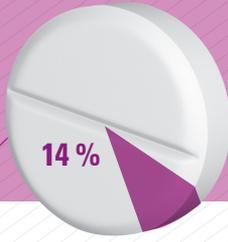
PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE IS ON THE RISE.

As a parent, you probably worry about street drugs, but what you may not realize is that there could be dangers in your own medicine cabinet. The misuse of prescription drugs – including pain killers, stimulants and sedatives – is on the rise in Canada.

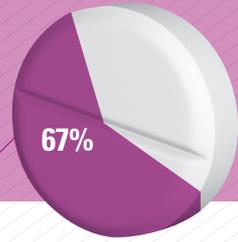
When prescription drugs are taken incorrectly, they can have harmful effects on a person's breathing and heart rate (even causing heart failure or seizures in some cases). Some stimulants, when taken in high doses, can also lead people to feel hostile or paranoid.



The use of painkillers by Canadians has increased by 50% from 2000 to 2004.



14% of Ontario students report using a prescription pain killer that wasn't prescribed for them.



2/3 of students who report misusing prescription pain killers say they got the drugs at home.

HAVE YOU HEARD THAT COUGH AND COLD MEDICINES CAN BE DANGEROUS, TOO?

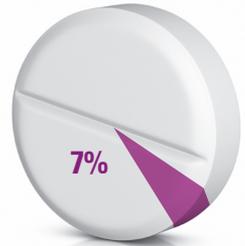
CHECK YOUR MEDICINE CABINET!

Some of the most commonly abused prescription pain killers include:

- Percocet
- Percodan
- Tylenol #3
- Demerol
- Codeine

OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS CAN ALSO CARRY RISKS

Cough and cold medicines that contain the ingredient dextromethorphan are sometimes used to get high. When taken incorrectly, these medicines can cause impaired motor function, numbness, nausea or vomiting.



WHEN MIXED WITH ALCOHOL, PRESCRIPTION AND OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS CAN HAVE DEVASTATING EFFECTS

7% of Ontario students report using over-the-counter cough and cold medications to get high.

Alcohol can have unpredictable effects on prescription and over-the-counter drugs. In some cases, it decreases their potency, while in other cases it can double their effects or change them all together. This can happen whether a person is drinking lightly or heavily. Furthermore, when any drug is mixed with alcohol, it can inhibit judgement and increase the likelihood of binge drinking, impaired driving and other risky behaviour.

PARENT ACTION TIPS

10 STRATEGIES FOR HELPING YOUR TEEN
MAKE GOOD DECISIONS ABOUT ALCOHOL
& OTHER DRUGS

START EARLY

LEARN FROM MISTAKES

BE OPEN

SET AN EXAMPLE

PROVIDE A SAFETY NET

STAY INFORMED



- 1 Find out, in a **friendly way**, where your teen is and who they're with.
- 2 **Be open** to negotiating with your teen about limits, family rules and consequences.
- 3 Start having talks about alcohol and other drugs early – before your kids reach adolescence-then keep **talking and listening**. Begin with the **easier discussions** about high caffeine energy drinks and prescription drugs, and build from there. Use movies, news stories and advertisements as the basis to discuss how alcohol and other drugs are shown in the media.
- 4 Discuss a broad range of issues not limited to substance use with your teen and **invite their opinions**, even if they are different from your own.
- 5 As they go through the teenage years, **let your kids know** what you think the **safest choices** about alcohol and other drugs are and what you expect of them.
- 6 Let teens know that their **safety comes first**, especially when you tackle the more difficult issues around drinking and marijuana. Let them know they can depend on you to **help them** if they feel concerned about their own or a friend's safety.
- 7 **Set an example** by being responsible about your own use of alcohol and other drugs. If you choose to drink, refer to Canada's Low Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines and discuss how you **use the guidelines** to manage your own drinking.
- 8 Recognize that experimentation and **mistakes happen**. By understanding that a teen's brain – especially the areas in charge of impulse control – is still developing, you'll be able to better understand why your teen may place themselves in risky situations. **Help your teen** to reflect on a mistake to make it into a learning opportunity, but be sure to wait until you're both calm and ready to discuss a problem rationally.
- 9 **Stay in the know**. You don't have to be an expert, but being informed about current evidence related to alcohol & other drugs will give you the information you need to help your teen make **better choices**.
- 10 Consider the **big picture**. Many youth today experience anxiety, stress and depression. Changes in mood, behaviour and attitude could be an indication of a problem with alcohol or other drugs, a mental health problem or both. If you feel your teen is experiencing problems, **seek help** from a professional.



FOR MORE STATS, FACTS AND TALKING POINTS GO TO WWW.PARENTACTIONPACK.CA

WITH THANKS TO THE LCBO AND THE BELLWOOD FOUNDATION FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN DEVELOPING AND PRODUCING THIS RESOURCE.



Leading the way to stronger youth and families