

CAMPAIGN For TOBACCO-FREE Kids®

Smoking and Other Drug Use

Teen smoking is an early warning sign for additional substance abuse problems. Youths age 12-17 who smoke are more than 11 times as likely to use illicit drugs and 16 times as likely to drink heavily as youths who do not smoke.¹ As the U.S. Supreme Court noted in 1962, "The first step toward addiction may be as innocent as a boy's puff on a cigarette in an alleyway."²

Smoking and Illegal Drugs

Smoking typically precedes other drug use. Among youths who have used both cigarettes and marijuana by the 12th grade, 65 percent smoked cigarettes before marijuana; and 98 percent of those who had used both cocaine and cigarettes smoked cigarettes first.³

The earlier a person uses tobacco, the more likely they are to experiment with cocaine, heroin or other illicit drugs. Those who start smoking as a child are three times more likely to use marijuana and four times more likely to use cocaine than those who do not smoke as children.⁴ In addition, more than half of all persons who start smoking before age 15 use an illicit drug in their lifetime, compared to only a quarter of those who do not start smoking until they are beyond age 17 -- with those who start smoking before age 15 are more than three times more likely to use cocaine. And those who start smoking before age 15 are seven times more likely to use cocaine than those who never smoke cigarettes at all.⁵

The earlier a person uses tobacco, the more likely he or she is to become a *regular* drug user as an adult. People who start smoking as children are almost four times more likely to be *regular* users of an illicit drug and three times more likely to use cocaine *regularly* than those who do not smoke as children.⁶

Heavy smokers are much more likely to use marijuana or harder drugs. Youths who smoke more than 15 cigarettes a day are more than twice as likely to use an illicit drug and 16 times more likely to use cocaine than those who smoke less frequently -- and are 10 times more likely to use an illicit drug and more than 100 times more likely to use cocaine than those who never smoke. Children who smoke a pack a day are also 13 times more likely to use heroin than children who smoke less heavily.⁷ In addition, 12- to 17-year-old daily smokers who smoke daily are approximately 14 times more likely to have binged on alcohol than those who do not smoke, more than 100 times more likely to have used marijuana at least ten times, and 32 times more likely to have used cocaine at least ten times.⁸

Heavy users of smokeless tobacco are significantly more likely to experiment with or regularly abuse illegal drugs. High school kids who use spit tobacco 20 to 30 days per month are nearly four times more likely to currently use marijuana than nonusers, almost three times more likely to ever use cocaine, and nearly three times more likely to ever use inhalants.⁹

Increases in cigarette prices reduce the demand for cigarettes and marijuana. Cigarette and marijuana are not substitutes (users do not increase their use of marijuana to compensate for smoking less -- or vice versa) and increases in cigarette prices, which reduce smoking, also reduce marijuana use.¹⁰

Smoking and Alcohol

Smokers, especially heavy smokers, are more likely to drink alcohol and to become problem drinkers than nonsmokers. Adolescent smokers, for example, are three times more likely to use alcohol than adolescents who do not smoke.¹¹ In addition:

- Smokers are over 30% more likely to consume alcohol and ten times more likely to develop alcoholism than nonsmokers.
- 80% to 95% of all alcoholics also smoke cigarettes, and 70% of all alcoholics are heavy smokers who consume more than one pack of cigarettes per day.
- The initiation of regular cigarette smoking typically precedes the onset of alcoholism by many years.¹²

Youths who have drunk alcohol and smoked cigarettes at least once in the past month are 30 times more likely to have smoked marijuana than those who report refraining from smoking or drinking alcohol.¹³

Heavy users of smokeless or spit tobacco are almost 16 times more likely than nonusers to currently consume alcohol, as well.¹⁴

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¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Summary of Findings from the 1998 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse* (August 1999), www.health.org/pubs/nhsda/.

² *Robinson v. California*, 370 U.S. 660 (June 25, 1962), <http://www.findlaw.com/casecode/supreme.html>.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People: A Report of the Surgeon General* (1994).

⁴ Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), Columbia University, *Cigarettes, Alcohol, Marijuana: Gateways to Illicit Drug Use* (October 1994), www.casacolumbia.org.

⁵ CASA, *Cigarettes, Alcohol, Marijuana: Gateways to Illicit Drug Use*.

⁶ CASA, *Cigarettes, Alcohol, Marijuana: Gateways to Illicit Drug Use*.

⁷ CASA, *Cigarettes, Alcohol, Marijuana: Gateways to Illicit Drug Use*.

⁸ HHS, *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People: A Report of the Surgeon General* (1994).

⁹ Everett, Sherry et al. "Other Substance Use Among High School Students Who Use Tobacco." *Journal of Adolescent Health* (November 1998).

¹⁰ Chaloupka, F., et al., "Do Higher Cigarette Prices Encourage Youth to Use Marijuana?," National Bureau of Economic Research (February 1999), www.uic.edu/~fjc/Presentations/Papers/W6939.pdf. Farrelly, M., et al., "The Joint Demand for Cigarettes and Marijuana: Evidence from the National Household Surveys on Drug Abuse," *Journal of Health Economics* 20: 51-68, 2001.

¹¹ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), *Alcohol Alerts: Alcohol and Tobacco* (January 1998).

¹² NIAAA, *Alcohol Alerts: Alcohol and Tobacco* (January 1998).

¹³ Commission on Substance Abuse Among America's Adolescents, *Substance Abuse and the American Adolescent* (August 1997).

¹⁴ Everett, Sherry et al. "Other Substance Use Among High School Students Who Use Tobacco." *Journal of Adolescent Health* (November 1998).