

Drug Use—A High-Risk Behavior

What is a prime contributing factor in many homicides, suicides, domestic abuse, absenteeism, and accidents? The answer is substance abuse. Substance abuse has effects on individuals and on society as a whole. You will learn strategies for avoiding and preventing substance abuse. Staying drug-free will help you to reach your goals.

hot link

medicine misuse For more information on medicine misuse and its dangers, see Chapter 23, page 520.

HEALTH TERMS

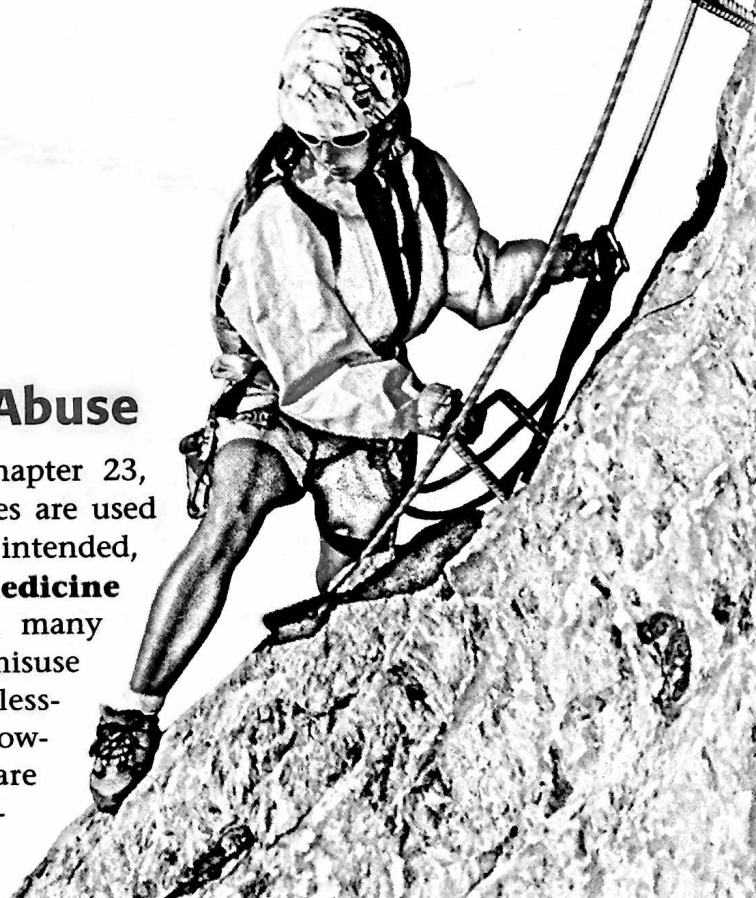
substance abuse
illegal drugs
synthetic drugs
illicit drug use
gateway drugs
overdose

HEALTH CONCEPTS

- Substance abuse is a high-risk behavior that includes misusing legal drugs or using illegal drugs or other chemicals.
- People abuse drugs for a variety of reasons, none of them healthful.
- Substance abuse can harm a person's physical, mental, emotional, and social health and even lead to death.
- Substance abuse has far-reaching consequences for the abuser, for others in the abuser's life, and for society at large.

Substance Abuse

As noted in Chapter 23, when medicines are used in ways other than intended, a problem called **medicine misuse** exists. In many cases, medicine misuse results from carelessness. Sometimes, however, medicines are misused intentionally. People will



take them deliberately to achieve a "high" from one or more of the known effects or reactions. In such cases, the user is guilty not only of *mis-use* but of *abuse*. **Substance abuse** is *any unnecessary or improper use of chemical substances for nonmedical purposes*. Substance abuse includes overuse or multiple use of a drug, including alcohol taken in combination with other drugs.

Not all substances that are abused are medicines. Many are *drugs*, chemical substances that serve no medical purpose and are simply used for recreational or other unhealthful purposes. Also known as **illegal drugs**, or *street drugs*, these substances are against the law for people of any age to manufacture, possess, buy, or sell. Their potential for harm is great.

Some drugs occur naturally, taking the form of extracts from plants, animals, or minerals. Others, called **synthetic drugs**, are *chemical substances produced artificially in a laboratory*. Regardless of their source or how they are taken, the effects of these drugs are deadly.

People who use illegal drugs are guilty of a crime called **illicit drug use**. This is *the use or sale of any substances that are illegal or otherwise not permitted*. Illicit drug use includes the selling of prescription medicines on the street. Even some drugs that are legal for adults, such as alcohol, are illegal for teens and can cause major health, safety, and social problems. For teens, alcohol and nicotine are also considered **gateway drugs**, or *drugs that often lead to other serious and dangerous drug use*.

Trends in Teen Drug Use


Even though in recent years abuse of drugs by teens has begun to level off, other drug trends suggest disturbing increases. Consider these facts:

- Teens in the United States are now using drugs at younger ages than ever before.
- According to the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, drug use among 12- to 17-year-olds more than doubled between 1993 and 1998.
- In 1998, nearly 11 percent of Americans age 12 and up used drugs.
- More teens are trying heroin than ever before, and more teen heroin users are showing up in hospital emergency rooms.
- In 1992, about 4 percent of all teens used marijuana. By 1998, that number had risen to about 9 percent.
- More teens than ever mistakenly consider marijuana to be a safe drug.

During the 1990s, these substance abuse statistics prompted the Secretary of Health and Human Services to call this generation of teens "a generation at risk." The good news is that trends can be changed. By choosing to stay away from drugs, you can become part of a generation newly committed to getting and staying drug-free.

Did You Know?

- According to the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, marijuana accounts for 81 percent of teen drug use.
- In 1998, tobacco use among teens had declined nearly 2 percent from 20 percent the previous year.

 **You will protect your health by being physically active and avoiding substance abuse.**



You know that drugs can be dangerous, but do you know how they alter the body and the mind? Find out the short-term and long-term physical and mental effects of illegal drugs at health.glencoe.com.

hot link

side effects For more information on the nature and types of side effects, see Chapter 23, page 516.

synergistic effect For more information on the synergistic effect and other interactions that result when medicines are combined, see Chapter 23, page 516.

hot link

HIV For more information on HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, see Chapter 30, page 656.

STDs For more information on STDs and measures you can take to avoid them, see Chapter 29, page 640.

tolerance For more information on tolerance to substances, see Chapter 23, page 517.

Why People Begin Using Drugs

If people know of the dangers of drugs, then why do so many try them? This question has different answers for different people. Many teens try drugs for one or more of the following reasons:

- They see their friends, parents, or older siblings using them.
- They feel pressured to use drugs and don't know how to say no.
- They want to fit in, relax, or seem mature.
- They see drugs glamorized on TV, in videos, in the movies, or in song lyrics.
- They seek a solution to boredom or are searching for new thrills.
- They are trying to escape from their problems.

Dangers of Substance Abuse

Like medicines, some drugs have serious **side effects**, which can range from minor to deadly. When taken in conjunction with one or more medicines or other drugs, including alcohol, they can also result in a **synergistic effect**. Illegal drugs may prove especially dangerous because, unlike medicines, there are no controls or means of monitoring these substances for quality, purity, or strength. Anyone who abuses drugs is also at risk for overdosing. An **overdose** is *a strong or even fatal reaction to taking a large amount of a drug*. Many overdoses are accidental. Often, overdoses occur when alcohol and other drugs are combined.

When drug use involves injecting substances through a needle, there may be added risks of contracting diseases such as hepatitis B, a serious and sometimes fatal liver ailment, and **HIV**, the virus that causes AIDS. Intravenous drug users often share needles, and traces of viruses in body fluids from infected people are easily spread to others who use the same needles.

People who experiment with drugs tend to lose control more readily than those who do not. This can lead to unwanted sexual encounters, **STDs**, or pregnancies. Substance abuse is also a major factor in many crimes, suicides, and both accidental and intentional deaths.

Substance abuse is like riding a "down" escalator. Taking that first step onto the moving stairway may seem harmless, but the consequences are enormous. These include the following:

- **Tolerance.** The body of the substance abuser begins to develop **tolerance** to the drug, needing more and more of it to get the same effects, and eventually needing it just to function.



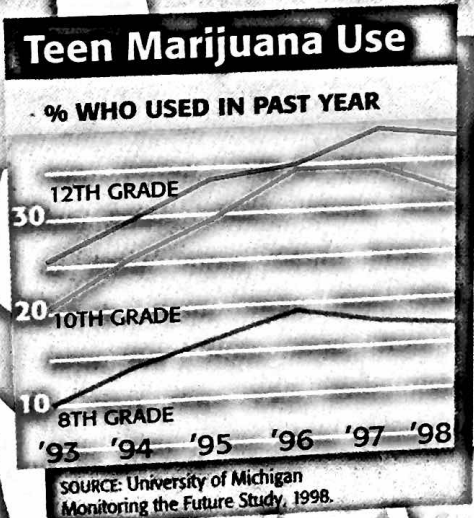
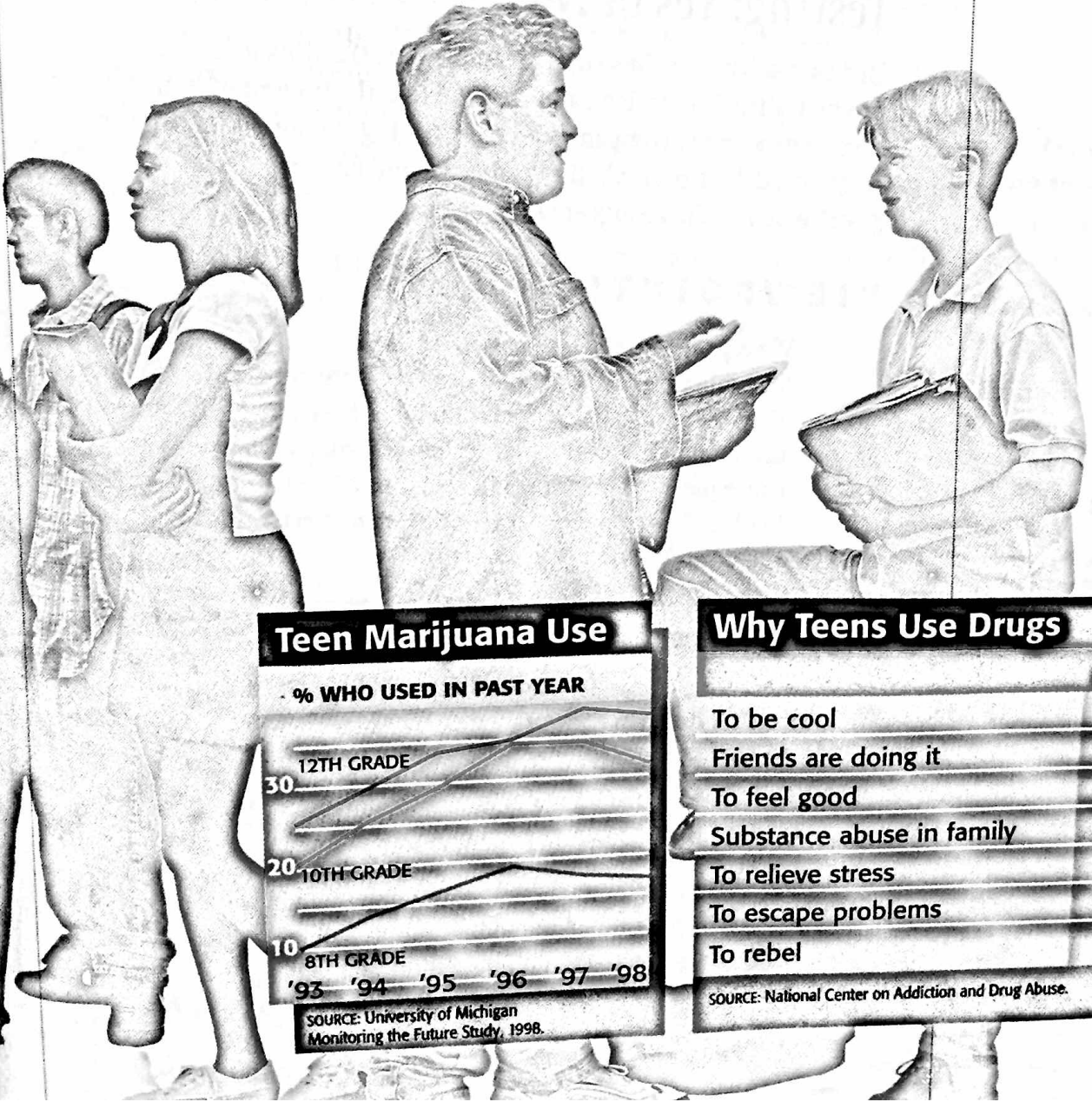
- **Physiological dependence.** The body develops a chemical need for a drug. A person who has developed tolerance and experiences severe effects when the drug is taken away is said to be physiologically dependent on that drug.
- **Withdrawal.** **Withdrawal** occurs when a person stops using a drug on which he or she is physiologically dependent. The symptoms of this process can include nervousness, insomnia, severe nausea, headaches, vomiting, chills, cramps, and, in some instances, even death.
- **Psychological dependence.** With psychological dependence, a person believes a drug is needed in order to feel good or to function normally. He or she has a continual desire to take the drug for its effect.
- **Addiction.** Addiction involves physiological and psychological dependence on a drug.

hot link

withdrawal For more information on withdrawal from substances, see Chapter 23, page 517

▼ *Helping people to understand the risks involved with drug use is one way to combat substance abuse.*

ACTIVITY *With classmates, brainstorm a list of reasons teens should avoid drug use.*



Why Teens Use Drugs

	AGE 12	AGE 17
To be cool	49%	11%
Friends are doing it	24%	25%
To feel good	9%	23%
Substance abuse in family	7%	4%
To relieve stress	6%	22%
To escape problems	3%	7%
To rebel	1%	6%

SOURCE: National Center on Addiction and Drug Abuse.



To learn more about substance abuse visit Web Links at health.glencoe.com.

Costs of Substance Abuse

In a teen's life, substance abuse can negatively affect performance in school, in sports, in relationships with peers, and in family life. It can affect a teen's emotional, social, and physical health. It can add undue pressure and stress to a period of life that is already filled with both. Furthermore, experimenting even once with a drug can get a teen in trouble with the law or even ruin his or her life. Educational goals may be interrupted and substance abuse can slow the progress toward becoming a mature adult.

update

▶ *Looking at the Issues*

Drug Testing: Yes or No?

It is estimated that substance abuse costs employers \$60 billion a year in decreased productivity, absenteeism, and accidents. In the interest of health, safety, and economics, many companies are now testing employees for drug use. This has triggered a debate over whether people should be tested, who should do the testing, and whether the results are reliable.

ANALYZING DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS

▶ **Viewpoint One**

Some groups claim that randomly testing people for drug use without just cause is an invasion of their rights, including their right to privacy.

▶ **Viewpoint Two**

Others believe that drug testing should be restricted to those who are in jobs where public safety is involved—such as pilots or bus drivers—or to cases where there is reason to suspect substance abuse, such as after a workplace accident.

▶ **Viewpoint Three**

Still other people argue that drug tests are not always accurate. They point out that people sometimes have others give drug-free urine samples in their place. Such situations can have severe consequences for the person being tested and for those in his or her life. The consequences for those incorrectly testing positive include job loss or damaged reputations.

EXPLORING YOUR VIEWS

1. Who, if anyone, do you think should be tested for drugs in the workplace? Why? In what kinds of situations?
2. When people do test positive for drugs, what do you think should happen to them? Why?
3. What do you think about schools testing students for drugs? What about testing for athletes?
4. What other means of identifying and getting help for students who are in trouble with drugs can you suggest?

COSTS TO OTHERS

Substance abuse affects not just the abuser but others in his or her life. Think about the number of drug-related crimes and deaths you read or hear about. According to the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, illegal drugs burden American society with an estimated \$67 billion in health, social, and criminal costs every year.

DRUGS AND PREGNANCY

Substance abuse can do serious harm to developing fetuses and to babies who ingest the substance through breast milk from nursing mothers who use drugs. Despite this, more than 5 percent of the 4 million women who gave birth in one recent year had used an illicit drug at some time during their pregnancy. Babies born to mothers who used depressants during pregnancy may be physically dependent on them and show withdrawal symptoms at birth. Birth defects and behavioral problems among these infants are common. Babies born to women who drink too much suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome. In addition, babies are often born addicted to the drugs their mothers have ingested. Those whose mothers used cocaine, heroin, or other narcotics go into severe withdrawal a few days after birth. Hearing the cries of a newborn going through withdrawal is a graphic reminder of the high and sometimes tragic costs of substance abuse.



▲ ***Using illegal drugs can lead to serious trouble.***

ACTIVITY ***Make a list of warnings about the dangers of substance abuse.***