
Parenting for Prevention

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There is an expectation that the holidays are wonderful for everyone. However, the reality is that the holidays can not only be stressful and challenging but can also pose additional risks for your teens in terms of using alcohol and other drugs

The stresses for teens at this time of year may include the college application process, social and relationship concerns and issues related to finances and other problems that are magnified during the holiday season. In addition, there are usually more holiday gatherings that include adults and teens where alcohol is readily available.

Finally, with adults busy during the holidays, there may be reduced supervision of teens as parents are focused on their usual responsibilities and the chores associated with the holidays. This reality provides teens with the possibility of using alcohol or other drugs.

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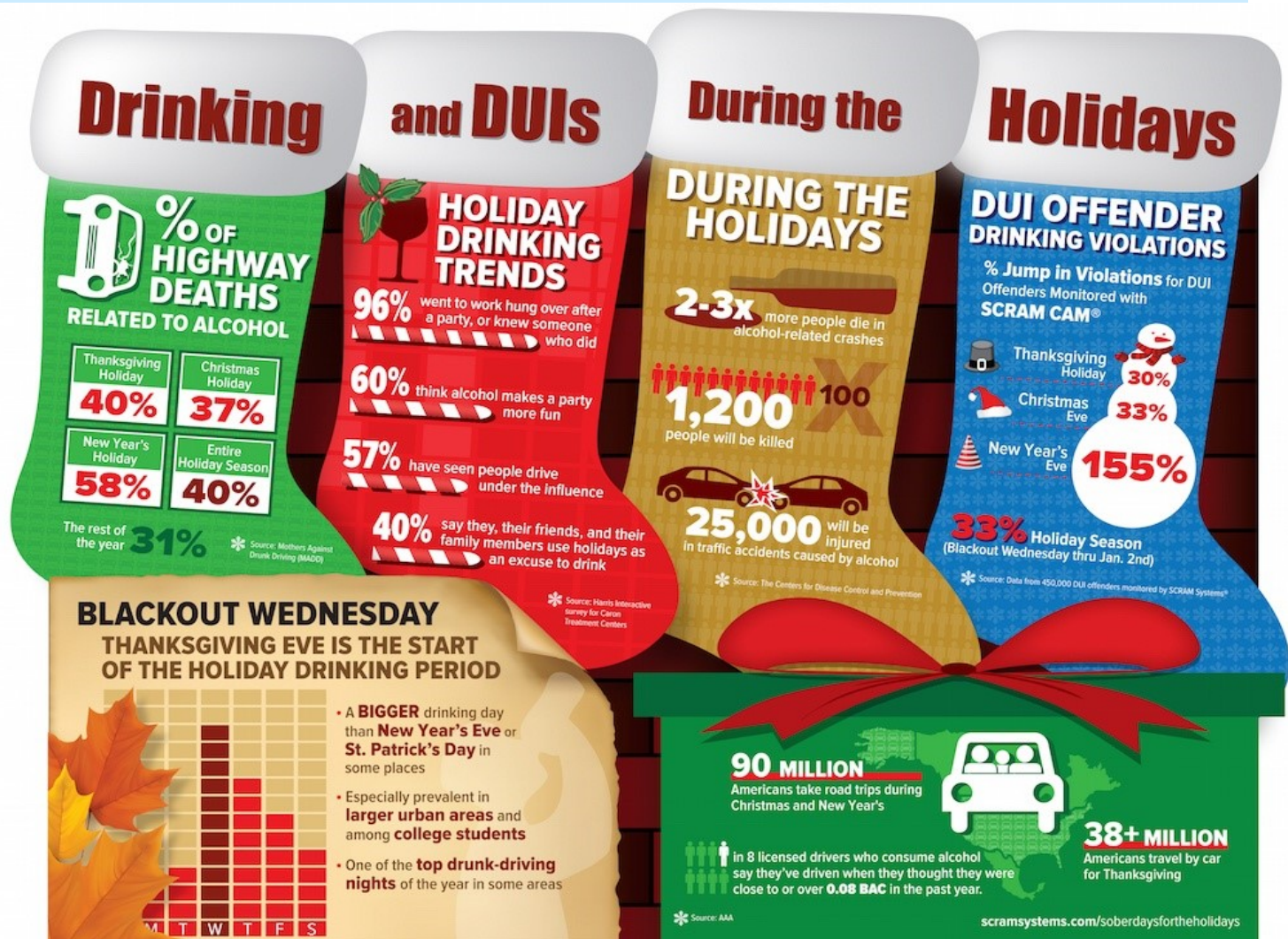
Holiday Challenges

It is a bit disconcerting for parents to realize that the holidays can be such a challenging time of the year to keep their children safe. In an article currently posted on the website of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong open relationship with a parent or caregiver. The SAMHSA website makes the following suggestions:

1. Show you disapprove of underage drinking and other drug misuse.

Over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision whether to drink. Send a clear and strong message that you disapprove of underage drinking and misuse of other drugs.





2. Show how you care about your child’s health, wellness, and success.

Young people are more likely to listen when they know you’re on their side. Reinforce why you don’t want your child to use alcohol or other drugs—because you want your child to be happy and safe. The conversation will go a lot better if you’re open and you show concern.

3. Show you’re a good source of information about alcohol and other drugs.

You want your child to make informed decisions about alcohol and other drugs with reliable information about their dangers. You don’t want your child to learn about alcohol and other drugs from unreliable sources. Establish yourself as a trustworthy source of information.

4. Show you’re paying attention and you’ll discourage risky behaviors.

Show you’re aware of what your child is up to, as young people are more likely to drink or use other drugs if they think no one will notice. Do this in a subtle way, without prying.

5. Build your child’s skills and strategies for avoiding underage drinking and drug use.

Even if you don’t think your child wants to drink or try other drugs, peer pressure is a powerful thing. Having a plan to avoid alcohol and drug use can help children make better choices. Talk with your child about what they would do if faced with a decision about alcohol and other drugs, such as texting a code word to a family member or practicing how they’ll say “no thanks.”

Keep it low-key. Don’t worry, you don’t have to get everything across in one talk. Plan to have many short talks.



There is an urgency to discuss vaping with your child given the tremendous increase in vaping by teenagers during the past few years. Vaping is the act of inhaling and exhaling the aerosol, often referred to as a vapor, produced by an e-cigarette or similar device. It's become more popular among teens than regular cigarettes, especially given that vaping devices can be used for anything from flavors like mango, mint or tutti frutti, to flavorings containing nicotine or THC, the chemical compound in marijuana that produces the high.

There are several risks to vaping for teens. In 2019, the Center for Disease Control says that there are three major risks for parents to be concerned about:

Vaping is often marketed to kids, downplaying the dangers.

With lots of flavors available for vaping liquids, as well as the variety of colors and devices available that charge just like cell phones, it's clear that vaping products are often marketed to teens. One of the slang terms for vaping, known as JUULing ("jeweling"), comes from the JUUL brand device that looks more like a flash drive as opposed to an e-cigarette. Vaping is also often sold as a "safer" alternative to cigarettes and some teens are under the false assumption that because e-cigarettes don't contain tobacco they're safe.

Vaping chemicals used in the liquids can be more concentrated and dangerous.

Inhaling from a vape pen or e-cigarette, especially in the case of one containing nicotine or THC, can enhance a drug user's high and can amplify a drug's side effects. Vaping is also relatively new and there are literally hundreds of brands, so there's not a lot of firm information about what chemicals might be in what vape liquids. But even beyond nicotine and THC, synthetic chemicals that make up these liquids – including "herbal incense" like spice and synthetic marijuana – expose the lungs to a variety of chemicals, which could include carcinogens and toxic metal nanoparticles from the device itself. Not only could these chemicals make their way into young lungs, causing irritation and potentially "smoker's cough," but they could also damage the inside of the mouth and create sores. The CDC recommends against avoiding vaping because of the proliferation of lung illnesses.

Vaping may make the transition to cigarette smoking easier in adolescence.

In a meta analysis of six studies, the findings concluded that the risk of smoking increases four times if a teen vapes versus a teen that does not. In another study of more than 2,000 10th graders, researchers found that one in five teens who reported a regular vaping habit at the start of the study smoked traditional cigarettes at least three times a month by the end of the study period. Another 12% of routine vapers smoked at least one day a month. By comparison, less than 1% of students who didn't try vaping reported smoking even one day a month at the end of the study. Make it clear to your son or daughter that you don't approve of them vaping or using e-cigarettes, no matter what.

Nicotine Withdrawal

When teens are not in school parents may be better able to notice the frequency of their teen's vaping, drinking and other drug use as well as possible nicotine and THC and withdrawal. Nicotine withdrawal symptoms and the onset of withdrawal can vary by person. In addition to the craving which can begin 30 minutes after the last nicotine use other symptoms may become apparent 4 to 24 hours after use and peak the third day after use, according to McLaughlin and other researchers at the U of Pennsylvania (2015). Nicotine withdrawal symptoms impact mood, thinking and physical wellbeing. The Diagnostic Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) lists the following primary symptoms: irritability, anger, frustration, anxiety, depressed mood difficulty concentrating, increased appetite, insomnia and restlessness. McLaughlin and his colleagues note that symptoms may also include constipation, dizziness, nightmares, nausea, gastrointestinal discomfort, difficulty concentrating, shaking, and memory difficulties. While some adolescents will be able to get through these symptoms others will choose to use nicotine again to feel better.

Therefore some teens will need additional help to stop. Your child's health care provider should be consulted because he/she can help determine the appropriateness of different cessation aides based on your teens medical history and current situation including psychological history.

What Parent's Can Do

Vaping became popular with teens in a very short time and literally "swept" through schools in an unprecedented manner. Since a teen vaping was undetectable, many adults had no idea what the teens were doing in school bathrooms, in their bedrooms or even in classrooms.

Even the language of vaping was something adults were not familiar with and they did not understand what words like "carts," "juelling," e-cigarettes, dabbing and e-juice meant and certainly did not realize that it was a way for teens to use, nicotine, marijuana and other substances.

School personal, parents, and the medical professionals were not equipped to deal with this phenomenon and there were no prevention programs in place. Many students are now finding themselves addicted to nicotine and THC from vaping.

If you think your teen is vaping, take a deep breath and set yourself up for success by creating a safe, open and comfortable space to start talking with your teen. As angry or frustrated as you feel, keep reminding yourself to speak and listen from a place of love, support and concern. Explain to them that young people who use THC or nicotine products in any form, including e-cigarettes or vaporizers, are uniquely at risk for short term and long-lasting effects. Because these substances affect the development of the brain's reward system, continued use can lead to addiction and the likelihood of addiction increases considerably for those who start young, as well as other health problems.

If you think that your child may need help quitting, text QUIT to 202-804-9884 or visit BecomeAnEx.org.

Up Coming Events

**December 12,
8:15am to 3:15pm
Westchester Marriott**

When The Holidays Aren't So Happy Conference

Treating Adolescents With a Marijuana Disorder
Paula Riggs, MD

The Health Consequences of Adolescent Vaping
Amy Bloom, MD

Community Approaches to Prevention
Will Jones

Understanding Cannabidiol (CBD)
Gregory Blunt, MD