



# BRIGHT FUTURES HANDOUT ► PATIENT

## 11 THROUGH 14 YEAR VISITS

Here are some suggestions from Bright Futures experts that may be of value to you and your family.

### ✓ HOW YOU ARE DOING

- Enjoy spending time with your family. Look for ways to help out at home.
- Follow your family's rules.
- Try to be responsible for your schoolwork.
- If you need help getting organized, ask your parents or teachers.
- Try to read every day.
- Find activities you are really interested in, such as sports or theater.
- Find activities that help others.
- Figure out ways to deal with stress in ways that work for you.
- Don't smoke, vape, use drugs, or drink alcohol. Talk with us if you are worried about alcohol or drug use in your family.
- Always talk through problems and never use violence.
- If you get angry with someone, try to walk away.

### ✓ YOUR GROWING AND CHANGING BODY

- Brush your teeth twice a day and floss once a day.
- Visit the dentist twice a year.
- Wear a mouth guard when playing sports.
- Be a healthy eater. It helps you do well in school and sports.
  - Have vegetables, fruits, lean protein, and whole grains at meals and snacks.
  - Limit fatty, sugary, salty foods that are low in nutrients, such as candy, chips, and ice cream.
  - Eat when you're hungry. Stop when you feel satisfied.
  - Eat with your family often.
  - Eat breakfast.
- Choose water instead of soda or sports drinks.
- Aim for at least 1 hour of physical activity every day.
- Get enough sleep.

### ✓ HEALTHY BEHAVIOR CHOICES

- Find fun, safe things to do.
- Talk with your parents about alcohol and drug use.
- Say "No!" to drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and e-cigarettes, and sex. Saying "No!" is OK.
- Don't share your prescription medicines; don't use other people's medicines.
- Choose friends who support your decision not to use tobacco, alcohol, or drugs. Support friends who choose not to use.
- Healthy dating relationships are built on respect, concern, and doing things both of you like to do.
- Talk with your parents about relationships, sex, and values.
- Talk with your parents or another adult you trust about puberty and sexual pressures. Have a plan for how you will handle risky situations.

### ✓ YOUR FEELINGS

- Be proud of yourself when you do something good.
- It's OK to have up-and-down moods, but if you feel sad most of the time, let us know so we can help you.
- It's important for you to have accurate information about sexuality, your physical development, and your sexual feelings toward the opposite or same sex. Ask us if you have any questions.

# 11 THROUGH 14 YEAR VISITS—PATIENT



## STAYING SAFE

- Always wear your lap and shoulder seat belt.
- Wear protective gear, including helmets, for playing sports, biking, skating, skiing, and skateboarding.
- Always wear a life jacket when you do water sports.
- Always use sunscreen and a hat when you're outside. Try not to be outside for too long between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm, when it's easy to get a sunburn.
- Don't ride ATVs.
- Don't ride in a car with someone who has used alcohol or drugs. Call your parents or another trusted adult if you are feeling unsafe.
- Fighting and carrying weapons can be dangerous. Talk with your parents, teachers, or doctor about how to avoid these situations.

Consistent with *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, 4th Edition

For more information, go to <https://brightfutures.aap.org>.

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# Tips for Parents of Adolescents



Adolescence is a time of change and challenge for your preteen or teenager. The changes that occur during adolescence are often confusing not only for your son or daughter, but for you as well. Though these years can be difficult, the reward is watching your child become an independent, caring, and responsible adult. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offers the following tips to help you face the challenges of your child's adolescence:

- 1. Spend family time with your adolescent.** Although many preteens and teens may seem more interested in friends, this does not mean they are not interested in family.
- 2. Spend time alone with your adolescent.** Even if your teen does not want time alone with you, take a moment here and there to remind him that your "door is always open," and you are always there if he needs to talk. Remind him often.
- 3. When your adolescent talks**
  - Pay attention.
  - Watch, as well as listen.
  - Try not to interrupt.
  - Ask him to explain things further if you don't understand.
  - If you don't have time to listen when your child wants to talk, set a time that will be good for both of you.
- 4. Respect your adolescent's feelings.** It's okay to disagree with your child, but disagree respectfully, not insultingly. Don't dismiss her feelings or opinions as silly or senseless. You may not always be able to help when your child is upset about something, but it is important to say, "I want to understand" or "Help me understand."
- 5. When rules are needed, set and enforce them.** Don't be afraid to be unpopular for a day or two. Believe it or not, adolescents see setting limits as a form of caring.
- 6. Try not to get upset if your adolescent makes mistakes.** This will help him take responsibility for his own actions. Remember to offer guidance when necessary. Direct the discussion toward solutions.

"I get upset when I find clothes all over the floor,"  
is much better than, "You're a slob."

Be willing to negotiate and compromise. This will teach problem solving in a healthy way. Remember to choose your battles. Some little annoying things that adolescents do may not be worth a big fight—let them go.

- 7. Criticize a behavior, not an attitude.** For example, instead of saying,

"You're late. That's so irresponsible.  
And I don't like your attitude,"

try saying,

"I worry about your safety when you're late. I trust you, but when I don't hear from you and don't know where you are, I wonder whether something bad has happened to you. What can we do together to help you get home on time and make sure I know where you are or when you're going to be late?"

- 8. Mix criticism with praise.** While your teen needs to know how you feel when she is not doing what you want her to do, she also needs to know that you appreciate the positive things she is doing. For example,

"I'm proud that you are able to hold a job and get your homework done. I would like to see you use some of that energy to help do the dishes after meals."

- 9. Let your child be the adolescent he wants to be, not the one you wish he was.** Also, try not to pressure your adolescent to be like you were or wish you had been at that age. Give your teen some leeway with regard to clothes, hairstyle, etc. Many teens go through a rebellious period in which they want to express themselves in ways that are different from their parents. However, be aware of the messages and ratings of the music, movies, and video games to which your child is exposed.
- 10. Be a parent first, not a pal.** Your adolescent's separation from you as a parent is a normal part of development. Don't take it personally.
- 11. Don't be afraid to share with your adolescent that you have made mistakes as a parent.** A few parenting mistakes are not crucial. Also, try to share with your teen mistakes you made as an adolescent.
- 12. Talk to your pediatrician if you are having trouble with your adolescent.** He or she may be able to help you and your child find ways to get along.

The following is additional information you may find helpful in understanding some of the life changes and pressures your adolescent may be experiencing.



## Dieting and body image

***"My daughter is always trying new diets.  
How can I help her lose weight safely?"***

We live in a society that is focused on thinness. Adolescents see many role models in fashion magazines, on television, and in the movies that emphasize the importance of being thin. This concern about weight and body image leads many adolescents, especially girls, to resort to extreme measures to lose weight. Be aware of any diet or exercise program with which your child is involved. Be watchful of how much weight your child loses, and make sure the diet program is healthy. Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa can be very dangerous. If you suspect your child has an eating disorder, talk to your pediatrician right away. Ask about the brochure from the AAP called *Eating Disorders: What You Should Know About Anorexia and Bulimia*.

Many diets are unhealthy for adolescents because they do not have the nutritional value that bodies need during puberty. If your teen wants to lose weight, urge her to increase physical activity and to take weight off slowly. Let her eat according to her own appetite, but make sure she gets enough fats, carbohydrates, protein, and calcium.

Make sure your teen is not confusing a "low-fat" diet with a "no fat" diet. Teens need 30% of their calories from fat, and cutting fat out of the diet altogether is not healthy. A low-fat diet should still include 30 to 50 grams of fat daily. Many teens choose vegetarian diets. If your child decides to become a vegetarian, make certain she reads about it and becomes an educated vegetarian. She may need to see her pediatrician or a nutritionist to ensure that she is getting enough fat, calories, protein, and calcium.

Many adolescents are uncomfortable with their bodies. If your adolescent is unhappy with the way she looks, encourage her to start a physical activity program. Physical activity will stop hunger pangs, create a positive self-image, and take away the "blahs". Unfortunately, some teens may try to change their bodies by dangerous means such as unhealthy dieting (as discussed previously) or with drugs such as anabolic steroids. Encourage healthy exercise. If your child wants to train with weights, she should check with her pediatrician, as well as a trainer, coach, or physical education teacher. Help create a positive self-image by praising your child about her appearance. Set a good example by practicing what you preach. Make exercise and eating right a part of your daily routine also.

### Nutrition

The growth rate during adolescence is one of the most dramatic changes the body ever goes through. It is very important for your adolescent to have a proper diet. Follow these suggestions to help keep your teen's diet a healthy one

- Limit fast food meals. Discuss the options available at fast food restaurants, and help your teen find a good balance in her diet. Fat should not come from junk food but from healthier foods such as cheese or yogurt. Vegetables and fruit are also important.
- Keep the household supply of "junk food" such as candy, cookies, and potato chips to a minimum.
- Stock up on low-fat healthy items for snacking such as fruit, raw vegetables, whole-grain crackers, and yogurt.
- Check with your pediatrician about the proper amounts of calories, fat, protein, and carbohydrates for your child.
- As a parent, model good eating habits.

## Dating and sex education

***"With all the sex on television, how can I teach  
my son to 'wait' until he is ready?"***

There are constant pressures for your adolescent to have sex. These pressures may come from the movies, television, music, friends, and peers. Teens are naturally curious about sex. This is completely normal and healthy. Talk to your adolescent to understand his feelings and views about sex. Start early and provide your teen with access to information that is accurate and appropriate. Delaying sexual involvement could be the most important decision your child can make. Talk to your teen or preteen about the following things he needs to think about before becoming sexually active:

**Medical and physical risks**, like unwanted pregnancy and STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) such as

- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis
- Chlamydia
- Herpes
- Hepatitis B
- HIV, the virus that causes AIDS

**Emotional risks**—that go along with an adolescent having sex before he is ready. The adolescent may regret the decision when he is older or feel guilty, frightened, or ashamed from the experience. Have your adolescent ask himself, "Am I ready to have sex?" "What will happen after I have sex?"

**Methods of contraception**—Anyone who is sexually active needs to be aware of the various methods of contraception that help prevent unintended pregnancies, as well as ways to protect against sexually transmitted diseases. Remember to tell your teen that latex condoms should always be used along with a second method of contraception to prevent pregnancy and STDs.

**Setting limits**—Make sure your adolescent has thought about what his limits are before dating begins.

**Most importantly, let your adolescent know that he can talk to you and his pediatrician about dating and relationships.** Offer your guidance throughout this important stage in your teen's life.

The following AAP brochures may help your teen in dealing with these difficult issues: *Deciding to Wait and Making the Right Choice: Facts For Teens on Preventing Pregnancy*.

### If you smoke... quit

If you or someone else in the household smokes, now is a good time to quit. Watching a parent struggle through the process of quitting can be a powerful message for a teen or preteen who is thinking about starting. It also shows that you care about your health, as well as your child's.

## Smoking and tobacco

***"My daughter smokes behind my back.  
How do I convince her to quit?"***

Smoking can turn into a lifelong addiction that can be extremely hard to break. Discuss with your adolescent some of the more undesirable effects of smoking, including bad breath, stained teeth, wrinkles, a long-term cough, and decreased athletic performance. Addiction can also lead to serious health problems like emphysema and cancer.

"Chew" or "snuff" can also lead to nicotine addiction and causes the same health problems as smoking cigarettes. Mouth wounds or sores also form and may not heal easily. Smokeless tobacco can also lead to cancer.

If you suspect your teen or preteen is smoking or using smokeless tobacco, talk to your pediatrician. Arrange for your child to visit the pediatrician, who will want to discuss the risks associated with smoking and the best ways to quit before it becomes a lifelong habit. Smokers young and old often are more likely to listen to advice from their doctor than from others.

## Alcohol

***"I know my son drinks once in a while,  
but it's just beer. Why should I worry?"***

Alcohol is the most socially accepted drug in our society, and also one of the most abused and destructive. Even small amounts of alcohol can impair judgment, provoke risky and violent behavior, and slow down reaction time. An intoxicated teenager (or anyone else) behind the wheel of a car is a lethal weapon. Alcohol-related car crashes are the leading cause of death for young adults, aged 15 to 24 years.

Though it's illegal for people under age 21 to drink, we all know that most teenagers are no strangers to alcohol. Many of them are introduced to alcohol during childhood. If you choose to use alcohol in your home, be aware of the example you set for your teen. The following suggestions may help:

- Having a drink should never be shown as a way to cope with problems.
- Don't drink in unsafe conditions—driving the car, mowing the lawn, using the stove, etc.
- Don't encourage your child to drink or to join you in having a drink.
- Never make jokes about getting drunk; make sure that your children understand that it is neither funny nor acceptable.
- Show your children that there are many ways to have fun without alcohol. Happy occasions and special events don't have to include drinking.
- Do not allow your children to drink alcohol before they reach the legal age and teach them never, ever to drink and drive.
- Always wear your seatbelt (and ask your children to do the same.)

## Drugs

***"I am afraid some of my daughter's friends  
have offered her drugs. How can I help  
her make the right decision?"***

Your child may be interested in using drugs other than tobacco and alcohol, including marijuana and cocaine, to fit in or as a way to deal with the pressures of adolescence. Try to help your adolescent build her self-confidence or self-esteem. This will help your child resist the pressure to use drugs. Encourage your adolescent to "vent" emotions and troubles through conversations and physical activity rather than by getting "high."

Set examples at home. Encourage your adolescent to participate in leisure and outside activities to stay away from the peer pressure of drinking and drugs. Talk with your children about healthy choices.

For more information on tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, visit the AAP Web site at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org), or ask your pediatrician about the following AAP brochures:

*Alcohol: Your Child and Drugs*

*Cocaine: Your Child and Drugs*

*Marijuana: Your Child and Drugs*

*Smoking: Straight Talk for Teens*

*Steroids: Play Safe, Play Fair*

*The Risks of Tobacco Use: A Message to Parents and Teens*

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From your doctor

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 57,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

American Academy of Pediatrics  
PO Box 747  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0747  
Web site — <http://www.aap.org>

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Illustration by  
Billy Nuñez, age 16

# DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION STARTS WITH PARENTS

## PREVENTION STARTS WITH PARENTS

As a parent, you have a major impact on your child's decision not to use tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.

- Prevention starts when you start talking with, and listening to, your child.
- Help your child make good choices and good friends.
- Teach your child different ways to say "No!"

**D**rugs, including tobacco and alcohol, are easily available to children and adolescents. As a parent, you have a major impact on your child's decision not to use drugs.

Most likely, children in grade school have not begun to use alcohol, tobacco, or any other kind of drug. That is why grade school is a good time to start talking about the dangers of drug use. Prepare your child for a time when drugs may be offered.

Drug abuse prevention starts with parents learning how to talk with their children about difficult topics. Then, the programs offered by school, sports, and other groups can support what you have started.

## PARENTS ARE POWERFUL

Parents are the strongest influence that children have. There is no guarantee that your child won't use drugs, but drug use is much less likely to happen if you:

- Provide guidance and clear rules about not using drugs.
- Spend time with your child.
- Do not use tobacco or other drugs yourself.

**If you do drink, do so in moderation, and never drive after drinking.**

## What messages do your actions and words send to your child?

Children notice how parents use alcohol, tobacco, and drugs at home, in their social life, and in other relationships. This includes how parents deal with strong feelings, emotions, stress, and even minor aches and pains.

**Having a designated driver sends a very important message to children—safety and responsibility.**

**Actions speak louder than words. Children really do notice what their parents say and do.**

## PREVENTION STARTS WHEN YOU START TALKING— AND LISTENING

Talk honestly with your child about healthy choices and risky behaviors. Listen to what your child has to say. Make talking and listening a habit, the earlier the better!





**Learn the facts about the harmful effects of drugs.**

Talk with your child about the negative effects alcohol and drugs would have on their brains and bodies and their ability to learn or play sports. Ask your pediatrician about the other dangers of drug use.

**As part of your regular safety conversations, talk about avoiding tobacco, alcohol, and drug use.**

**Be clear and consistent about family rules.**

It does not matter what other families decide; your family rules show your family values.

**Correct any wrong beliefs your child may have.**

- "Everybody drinks."
- "Marijuana won't hurt you."

**Avoid TV programs, movies, and video games that glamorize tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.**

Since it's hard to escape the messages found in music and advertising, discuss with your child the influence these messages have on us.

**Find time to do things together.**

Eating together as a family is a good time to talk and learn about what's going on.



**MAKING SMART CHOICES**

It's a parent's job to use love and experience to correct mistakes and poor choices.

By using a mix of praise and criticism, you can correct your child's behavior without saying your child is bad. This helps children build self-confidence and learn how to make healthy and safe choices. In time, making smart choices on their own will become easier.

**Let children know you care about them.  
Talk with them about being safe.**

**HELP YOUR CHILD MAKE GOOD CHOICES AND FRIENDSHIPS**

A good sense of self-worth and knowing what is right and wrong will help your child say "No!" to drugs and other risky behaviors. Help your child by

- Noticing efforts as well as successes.
- Praising for things done well and for making good choices.

**Encourage positive friendships and interests.**

- Check to see that the friends and neighbors your child spends time with are safe and have values similar to yours.
- Find ways to get your child involved in sports, hobbies, school clubs, and other activities. These usually are positive interactions that help develop character and lead to good peer relationships.
- Look for activities that you and your child or the entire family can do together.

**Help your child learn the importance of being a responsible individual and what it means to be a real friend.**

Children need to learn that doing something they know is wrong is not a good way to "fit in" or feel accepted by others.

Remind your child that real friends do not:

- Ask friends to do risky things like use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.
- Reject friends when they don't want to do something that they know is wrong.



**Good communication between you and your child is one of the best ways to prevent drug use. If talking with your child becomes a problem, ask your pediatrician for help.**



## **HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN DIFFERENT WAYS TO SAY "NO!"**

Teach your child how to respond to someone offering drugs. It is much easier to say "No!" when prepared ahead of time.

It helps if you role play and practice. This way, it becomes natural to do at least one of the following:

- Firmly say, "No!"
- Give a reason—"No thanks, I'm not into that." or "No, my parents would get really mad at me."
- Suggest something else to do, like watch a movie or play a game.
- Leave—go home, go to class, go join other friends.

Connected Kids are Safe, Strong, and Secure

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 66,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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# Talk with Your Teen About E-cigarettes: A Tip Sheet for Parents



## BEFORE THE TALK

*Know the facts.*

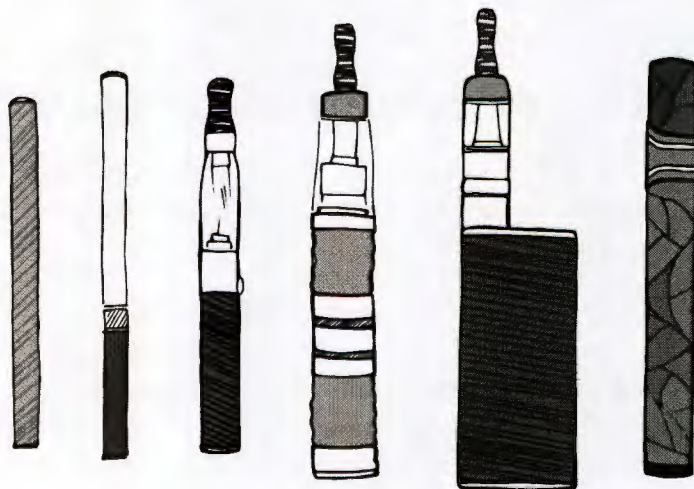
- Get credible information about e-cigarettes and young people at [E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov).

*Be patient and ready to listen.*

- Avoid criticism and encourage an open dialogue.
- Remember, your goal is to have a conversation, not to deliver a lecture.
- It's OK for your conversation to take place over time, in bits and pieces.

*Set a positive example by being tobacco-free.*

- If you use tobacco, it's never too late to quit. For free help, visit [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov) or call **1-800-QUIT-NOW**.





## START THE CONVERSATION

### *Find the right moment.*

- A more natural discussion will increase the likelihood that your teen will listen. Rather than saying "we need to talk," you might ask your teen what he or she thinks about a situation you witness together, such as:
  - » Seeing someone use an e-cigarette in person or in a video.
  - » Passing an e-cigarette shop when you are walking or driving.
  - » Seeing an e-cigarette advertisement in a store or magazine or on the internet.



### *Ask for support.*

- Not sure where to begin? Ask your health care provider to talk to your teen about the risks of e-cigarettes.
- You might also suggest that your teen talk with other trusted adults, such as relatives, teachers, faith leaders, coaches, or counselors whom you know are aware of the risks of e-cigarettes.
- These supportive adults can help reinforce your message as a parent.

## ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS

Here are some questions and comments you might get from your teen about e-cigarettes and some ideas about how you can answer them.

### *Why don't you want me to use e-cigarettes?*

- Science shows that e-cigarettes contain ingredients that are addictive and could harm different parts of your body.
- Right now, your brain is still developing, which means you are more vulnerable to addiction. Many e-cigarettes contain nicotine, and using nicotine can change your brain to make you crave more nicotine. It can also affect your memory and concentration. I don't want that for you!
- E-cigarettes contain chemicals that are harmful. When people use e-cigarettes, they breathe in tiny particles that can harm their lungs.

- The cloud that people exhale from e-cigarettes can expose you to chemicals that are not safe to breathe.

### *What's the big deal about nicotine?*

- Your brain is still developing until about age 25. The Surgeon General reported that nicotine is addictive and can harm your brain development.
- Using nicotine at your age may make it harder for you to concentrate, learn, or control your impulses.
- Nicotine can even train your brain to be more easily addicted to other drugs like meth and cocaine.



- I don't say this to scare you, but I want you to have the facts because nothing is more important to me than your health and safety.

### *Aren't e-cigarettes safer than conventional cigarettes?*

- Because your brain is still developing, scientific studies show that it isn't safe for you to use any tobacco product that contains nicotine, including e-cigarettes.
- Whether you get nicotine from an e-cigarette or a cigarette, it's still risky.
- Some e-cigarette batteries have even exploded and hurt people.

### *I thought e-cigarettes didn't have nicotine — just water and flavoring?*

- I used to think that too. But many e-cigarettes have nicotine. There are also other chemicals in them that can be harmful.
- Let's look at the Surgeon General's website on e-cigarettes ([E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov)) together so you can see for yourself.

### *I (or my friends) have tried e-cigarettes and it was no big deal.*

- I appreciate your honesty. In the future, I hope you (or your friends) will stay away from e-cigarettes and other tobacco products, including cigarettes. Science shows that e-cigarettes contain ingredients that are addictive and could harm different parts of your body.
- Next time we go to the doctor, let's ask about the risks of nicotine, e-cigarettes, and other tobacco products.

### *You used tobacco, so why shouldn't I?*

- If I could live my life over again, I never would have started smoking. I learned that people who smoke cigarettes are much more likely to develop, and die from, certain diseases than people who don't smoke. This was really scary, so I quit smoking.
- Quitting was really hard, and I don't want you to go through that. The best thing is to not start at all.





## KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Many parents find that texting is a great way to reach their teens. Here are some suggestions for text messages that might catch your teen's attention. And, you can easily share pages of the website ([E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov)) with your teen.



Share this page

Look for this symbol, click it, type in the message you want or use the message provided, and share with your teen via Facebook, Twitter, or email.

### *Connect and encourage.*

- You always liked science. Check out the science about e-cigarettes and young people: **[E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov)**
- Getting off nicotine is hard but I'm so happy I quit. Don't make that mistake and get addicted. Smoking and tobacco use, including using e-cigarettes, are unsafe for young people.

### *Remind and repeat.*

- Most teenagers don't use e-cigarettes. E-cigarettes with nicotine can mess with your brain, and your brain is still developing until you are at least 25.
- You might be tempted by e-cigarette flavors, but inhaling certain flavorings that have been found in some e-cigarettes can be harmful.

### *Share facts and resources.*

- Just learned that many e-cigarettes have nicotine in them. That's the drug that makes cigarettes so addictive. Nicotine can also mess with your brain development.
- Just saw a report from the Surgeon General that e-cigarettes can mess with how your brain develops and might even affect your mood and focus. Please don't use any products that contain nicotine.
- Hope none of your friends use e-cigarettes around you. Even breathing the cloud they exhale can expose you to nicotine and chemicals that can be dangerous to your health.



Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention  
Office on Smoking  
and Health





## Marijuana

### What Is Marijuana?

Marijuana is a shredded, green-brown mix of dried flowers, stems, and leaves from the plant *Cannabis sativa*. A stronger form of marijuana, called hashish (hash), looks like brown or black cakes or balls.

Marijuana is usually rolled and smoked like a cigarette (joints or doobies), or put in hollowed-out cigars (blunts), pipes (bowls), or water pipes (bongs). Some people mix it into food or brew it as a tea.

### Short-Term Effects

The main active chemical in marijuana is THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol). When someone smokes marijuana, THC goes from the lungs into the bloodstream. From there, it ends up in the brain and other organs.

THC connects with a receptor on nerve cells in the brain. When these nerve cells are in the parts of the brain that govern sensory perception and pleasure, it causes the marijuana "high."

THC also connects with receptors on nerve cells in other parts of the brain. When those parts of the brain affect thinking, memory, coordination, and concentration, it can cause unwanted side effects, including:

- difficulty thinking and problem solving
- problems with memory and learning
- loss of coordination
- distorted perception

These side effects are temporary, but they can make it dangerous to do things like drive while under the influence of marijuana.

People also might notice other short-term side effects of using marijuana, such as:

- an increase in appetite
- feeling lightheaded or drowsy
- a decrease in inhibitions

### Long-Term Effects

Research has found that people who use marijuana over a long period of time can have more lasting side effects. For example:

- **Changes in the brain.** Marijuana can affect the parts of the brain that play a role in our ability to remember, multitask, and pay attention.
- **Fertility issues.** Animal studies suggest that using a lot of marijuana might be linked to decreased sperm count in men and delayed ovulation in women. Women who use marijuana when they are pregnant may be more likely to have babies with developmental and behavioral problems.
- **Respiratory problems.** People who smoke marijuana a lot can develop problems with the respiratory system—like more mucus, a chronic cough, and bronchitis.
- **Immune system problems.** Using marijuana a lot might make it harder for the body to fight off infections.
- **Emotional problems.** People who use a lot of marijuana are more likely to say they notice signs of depression or anxiety. If someone has a condition like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, marijuana can sometimes make symptoms worse.

### Other Problems

Some states are changing their laws to make it legal to have small amounts of marijuana in certain situations (like when it's prescribed for medical use). But many states still have laws against using, growing, or selling

marijuana and people caught with it could face charges, including jail time.

Here are a few ways marijuana use could affect you:

- **Criminal charges.** Marijuana laws can be confusing. For example, a state might allow people to have a small amount of marijuana with a doctor's prescription—but the same state's laws make it illegal to buy, sell, or grow it.
- **Career problems.** People charged under marijuana laws may end up with criminal records that hurt their plans for college or finding a job.
- **Drug testing.** These days, employers often test for drug use as part of the hiring process. Marijuana can show up on a drug test for several weeks after it was last used. So people who use marijuana may find they don't get a job they want. Some companies do routine drug tests on employees, so people who use marijuana can lose their jobs.

### Medical Use of Marijuana

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved pills containing THC as a way to help relieve pain, nausea, muscle stiffness, or problems with movement—particularly for people with cancer or AIDS.

There's still a lot of discussion about the medical use of marijuana, though. So the THC pill is only available in some states and requires a doctor's prescription.

At the moment, there's not enough research to say for sure if smoking marijuana is any more helpful than taking THC as a pill. Scientists are still studying this.

### What If I Want to Quit?

People who use marijuana for a while can have withdrawal symptoms when they try to give it up. They may feel irritable, anxious, or depressed; have trouble sleeping; or not feel like eating.

Marijuana withdrawal can be a bit like caffeine withdrawal: It's usually worst a day or two after someone stops using marijuana. After that, withdrawal symptoms gradually decrease. They're usually gone a week or two after the person no longer uses the drug.

If you or someone you know wants to stop using marijuana but has trouble quitting, it can help to talk to a counselor. Studies suggest that a combination of individual counseling and group therapy sessions is the best approach for stopping marijuana use.

Reviewed by: Julia Brown Lancaster, MSN, WHNP-BC

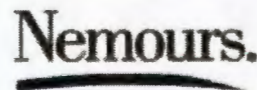
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Note: All information on TeensHealth® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

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The logo for The Nemours Foundation, featuring the word "Nemours." in a serif font with a horizontal line underneath.





# How to Beat Internet Addiction

Using the Internet for homework and for fun is common and normal. But, when your time online takes away from homework, time with friends and family or other things you enjoy, it's called Internet addiction. In this handout, you will learn tips to cut down on the time you spend online or on mobile apps.

## WHAT IS INTERNET ADDICTION?

**Internet addiction** is when you gradually (over time) lose control over how often you limit, avoid or control the amount of time you spend on the Internet. This can also include mobile apps.

For teens who have Internet addiction, going online releases **endorphins** (brain chemicals that trigger feelings of pleasure). This makes it very hard to control or limit how much time you spend online.

## WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF INTERNET ADDICTION?

**Internet addiction is similar to other types of addictions because it interrupts your real-life relationships with friends and family.** Time away from real-life relationships can cause you to be **socially awkward** because you haven't practiced your social skills with real people.

Internet addiction can also cause:

- Insomnia (not sleeping well)
- Not showering or keeping up with personal hygiene
- Not eating regularly
- Headaches and backaches
- Dry eyes from looking at a screen for a long time
- Carpal tunnel syndrome (numbness or tingling in your hand and arm)

### **A note for your parents...**

Doctors aren't sure what causes Internet addiction in teens. But, teens are more likely to have an Internet addiction if they are anxious, depressed, have low self-esteem, a poor self-image or have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

You can help your teen beat his/her Internet addiction by supervising how much time your teen spends online or on their smartphone or tablet. Use an app like Screen Time Parental Control® to track and set limits on your teen's time online.

## HOW CAN I BEAT MY INTERNET ADDICTION?

- **If you think you have an Internet addiction, talk with your doctor or your parents.** They can help you come up with ways to beat your Internet addiction.
- **Pay attention to when you use the Internet or mobile apps.** If you're using the Internet or mobile apps for homework or work, that's okay. If your time online is taking away from friends, family and other things you enjoy, it's time to unplug.
- **Turn off or silence notifications for email, games and social media.** You will be less tempted to check if you can't hear the notifications.
- **Use a free app to track your Internet usage.** Some apps we suggest include:
  - **Break Free Cell Phone Addiction®.** This app lets you track and take control of how much you use the Internet or mobile apps. It also has timers that let you set how much time you spend online and tools to help you break free from Internet addiction. You can also share your accomplishments with others from the app.
  - **Quality Time – My Digital Diet®.** This app lets you track your Internet and app usage. It also lets you set your own time limits and breaks.
  - **Screen Time Companion®.** This app works with the Screen Time Parental Control® app. Your family decides how long you can spend on different apps and the Internet. You can also track your Internet and app usage.
- **Do something you enjoy that doesn't involve the Internet.** Play a sport or get outside. Read a book, draw or paint. Spend time with friends and family. Cook a healthy meal or take your dog for a walk.
- **Talk to others about Internet addiction.** Ask others about ways they have cut down on time spent online. This builds a relationship and trust between you and the other person.