

# Drug Use—A High-Risk Behavior

### VOCABULARY

**substance abuse**  
**illegal drugs**  
**illicit drug use**  
**overdose**  
**psychological dependence**  
**physiological dependence**  
**addiction**

### YOU'LL LEARN TO

- Define substance abuse and recognize the health risks involved.
- Analyze the harmful effects of drugs on the fetus.
- Analyze the harmful effects of drugs, such as physical, mental, social, and legal consequences.



**QUICK START** Substance abuse has effects both on individuals and on society as a whole. List as many of the dangerous effects of drugs as you can think of that affect the user, the user's family and friends, and the rest of society.

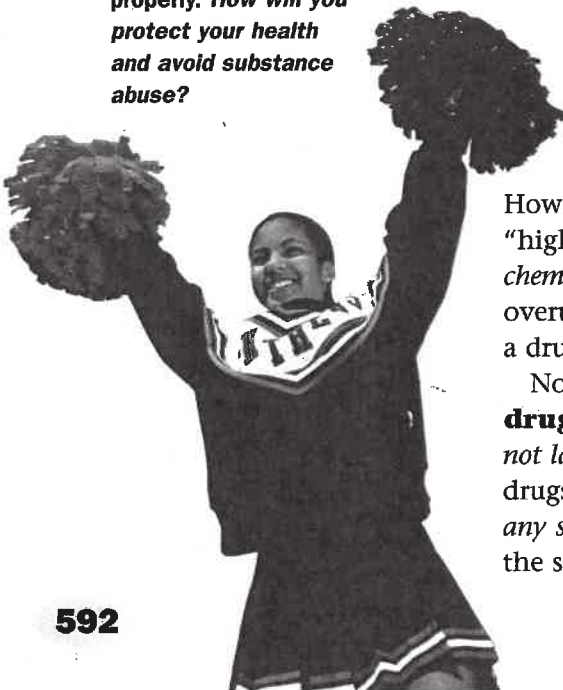
▼ Substance abuse harms concentration and coordination. You cannot do your best if your body and mind are not functioning properly. How will you protect your health and avoid substance abuse?

No one starts using drugs with the intention of causing a drug-related injury or getting hooked on the drug. Substance abuse is a high-risk behavior. Recognizing the difference between drug misuse and substance abuse will help you avoid the risks associated with these potentially dangerous substances.

## What Is Substance Abuse?

As you learned in Lesson 1, medicine misuse occurs when people use medicines carelessly or in an improper way. However, some people misuse medicines intentionally to achieve a "high." This is **substance abuse**, *any unnecessary or improper use of chemical substances for nonmedical purposes*. Substance abuse includes overuse or multiple use of a drug, use of an illegal drug, and use of a drug in combination with alcohol or other drugs.

Not all abused substances are medicines. Many are **illegal drugs**, or street drugs, *chemical substances that people of any age may not lawfully manufacture, possess, buy, or sell*. People who use illegal drugs are guilty of a crime called **illicit drug use**, *the use or sale of any substance that is illegal or otherwise not permitted*. This includes the selling of prescription drugs on the street.



## Factors That Influence Decisions About Drugs

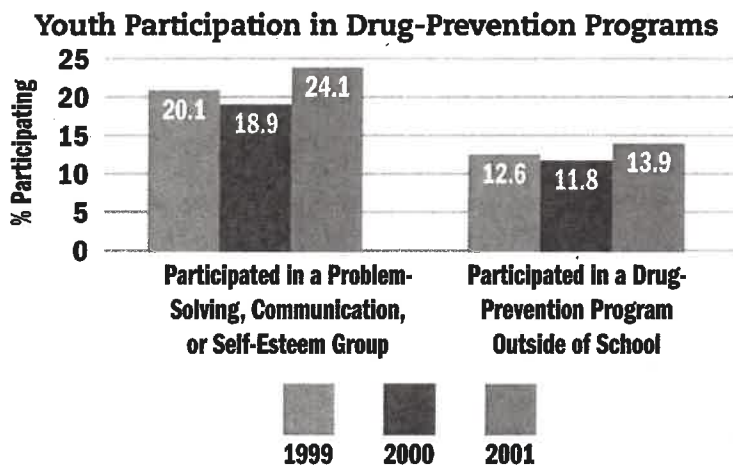
All teens are faced with choices about drug abuse. Many factors influence a teen's response to the opportunities to experiment with drugs, including the following:

- ▶ **Peer pressure** is the influence that people your age may have on you. Teens whose friends and acquaintances avoid drug use can say no to drugs more easily than teens whose friends accept and even encourage drug use.

# Real-Life Application

## Analyzing Trends: Drug-Prevention Programs

According to findings by a National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), more and more teens are getting involved in drug-prevention programs. What effect do you think this has on teens' making the decision to avoid drug use?



Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: NHSDA Survey, 2001

### ACTIVITY

Write a newspaper article that describes factors that influence teens' choices about whether to use drugs. Include internal and external influences. How can teens benefit from participating in drug-prevention programs and influence others in a positive and healthful way?

- In 2001, 24.1 percent of youths surveyed participated in a problem-solving, communication, or self-esteem group. The percentage of students who had participated in a drug-prevention program outside of school was 13.9 percent.
- According to the results of this survey, teens reporting an increase in the use of illicit drugs did not participate in such a program. What does this indicate about the influence drug-prevention programs can have on a teen's decision to avoid drugs?
- Survey results also showed 55.9 percent of youths age 12 to 17 indicated that they had talked with a parent in the past year about the dangers of alcohol and drug use. What effect do you think support from parents has on teens' participation in drug-prevention programs?



**A** strong, supportive system of family and friends can help a teen make the healthful decision to avoid drugs. *What other factors help you remain drug free?*

### hot link

**hepatitis B and HIV** For more information on hepatitis B and HIV, see Chapters 24 and 25, pages 638 and 662.

- ▶ **Family members** can help teens resist drugs. Parents and other adults who avoid drug use and who discourage drug experimentation influence their teens to abstain from drugs.
- ▶ **Role models** are people you admire and want to imitate. Teens who look up to coaches, athletes, actors, and professionals who avoid and discourage drug use have an advantage in resisting drugs.
- ▶ **Media messages** can influence your impression of drug use. Messages from TV, digital media, film, and music, for example, may be misleading about the harmful effects of drugs.
- ▶ **Perceptions** of society's drug behavior are often inaccurate. According to the 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, nearly 70 percent of high school students do not use drugs.

## Health Consequences of Drug Use

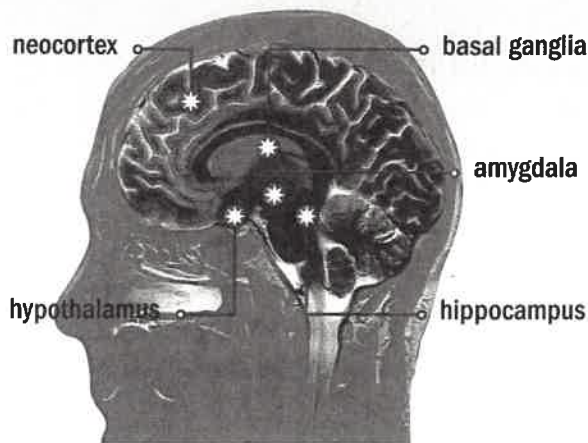
**I**llegal drugs have harmful side effects that can range from minor to deadly. Unlike medicines, these substances are not monitored for quality, purity, or strength. The effects of such drugs is unpredictable. Drug abuse affects all sides of the health triangle.

- ▶ **Physical consequences.** Once a drug enters the bloodstream, it can harm a user's brain, heart, lungs, and other vital organs. A serious danger of drug abuse is the risk of overdosing. An **overdose** is a strong, sometimes fatal reaction to taking a large amount of a drug. Some drug use involves injecting substances through a needle, which can increase the risk of contracting diseases such as **hepatitis B** and **HIV**.
- ▶ **Mental/emotional consequences.** Drugs cloud reasoning and thinking, and users lose control of their behavior. As shown in **Figure 23.2** on page 595, the drug ecstasy alters the brain's structure and function. People who experiment with drugs often lose sight of their values. While under the influence of drugs, teens may no longer recall the positive beliefs, values, and ideals they have used to guide their own conduct.
- ▶ **Social consequences.** Even people who are "just experimenting" with drugs do and say things they later regret. Substance abuse can have a negative effect on relationships with friends and family members. It can cause teens to be expelled from school or dropped from a school team, and it often has legal consequences. Substance abuse is a major factor in many crimes, suicides, and unintentional injuries.

FIGURE 23.2

## DRUG USE AND THE BRAIN

Ecstasy, a stimulant drug that speeds up the nervous system, affects parts of the brain controlling thinking, mood, memory, and perception.



### Understanding the Addiction Cycle

Teens who experiment with drugs will experience side effects, or unwanted reactions. The side effects can range from nausea and headaches to a loss of consciousness and even death, and can occur with a teen's first use of a drug. What may begin as a seemingly harmless pastime can result in serious consequences, including:

- ▶ **Tolerance.** The body of the substance abuser needs more and more of the drug to get the same effect.
- ▶ **Psychological dependence.** A condition in which a person believes that a drug is needed in order to feel good or to function normally, **psychological dependence** develops over time. The user has a continuing desire to take the drug for its effect.
- ▶ **Physiological dependence.** A person who experiences the severe effects of withdrawal when he or she stops taking a drug has a **physiological dependence**, a condition in which the user has a chemical need for the drug. Symptoms of withdrawal can include nervousness, insomnia, severe nausea, headaches, vomiting, chills, and cramps. In some cases, death can result.
- ▶ **Addiction.** Anyone who takes drugs risks one of the most frightening side effects: **addiction**, a *physiological or psychological dependence on a drug*. Addiction causes persistent, compulsive use of a substance known by the user to be harmful. People who are addicted to a substance have great difficulty in stopping without professional intervention.

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**addiction** For more information on addiction, see Chapter 22, page 578.

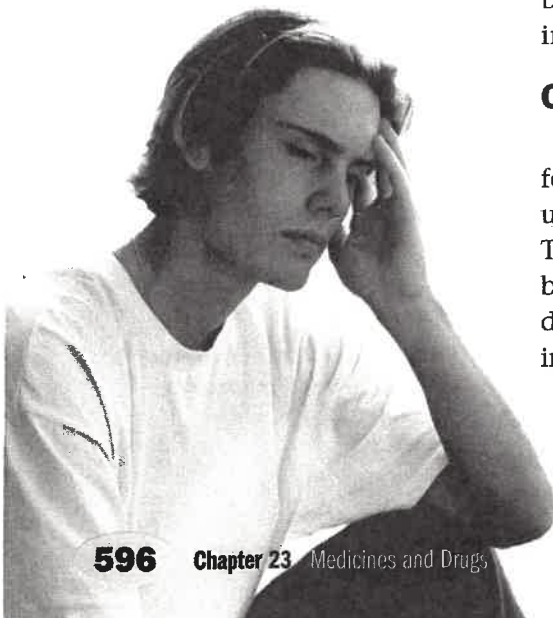
## CHARACTER CHECK

**Courage.** When you resist the pressure to use drugs, you demonstrate that you are responsible and that you have the courage to do the right thing. **Join with friends to visit elementary schools. Share with younger students the positive behaviors and actions you use to stay drug free.**

### hot link

**STDs** For more information about STDs, see Chapter 25, page 646.

⚠ **Experimenting even once with a drug can quickly lead to a harmful and damaging addiction. What consequences of drug use affect family and friends?**



## Other Consequences of Drug Use

In addition to the physical risks to a person's health, substance abuse can damage a teen's performance in school, and in sports, and his or her relationships with friends and family. The abuse of drugs adds pressure and stress to a period of life that is already filled with both.

### Consequences for the Individual

Drug use affects all aspects of a person's health. Mental and physical health suffer as tolerance, dependence, and addiction develop. The effects of drug use also influence emotional health. People who experiment with drugs tend to lose control more readily than those who do not. This tendency can lead to violence. Substance abuse is also a major factor in violent crimes, suicides, and both unintentional and intentional deaths. Drug use can lead to a relaxing of inhibitions. As a result, drug users are at risk for engaging in sexual activity, which can lead to unintended pregnancy and exposure to **STDs**.

### LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

Teens possessing, using, manufacturing, or selling drugs are committing the crime of illicit drug use. Being arrested leads to court fines and legal fees. Some states automatically suspend the driving privileges of minors convicted of a drug offense. Suspension from school, jail time, and probation also are consequences of arrest and conviction.

### Consequences for Family and Friends

Some people believe that their decision about drug use is their business and doesn't involve anyone else. That is not true. When an individual chooses to abuse drugs, the decision affects everyone in the user's life. Teens who become involved with drugs lose their interest in healthy activities and have little time for friends who value a drug-free lifestyle. Family members have a responsibility to be aware of the warning signs of drug use and to encourage the individual to seek professional help.

### Consequences for Babies and Children

Substance abuse can cause considerable harm to developing fetuses, infants, and children of drug users. A pregnant female who uses drugs passes the drug through the placenta to her unborn child. The baby may be spontaneously aborted or born with birth defects, behavioral problems, or an addiction. If either parent is using injected drugs, the baby may be born with HIV caused by the sharing of infected needles by one or both parents. A nursing mother who uses drugs passes these substances through breast milk to her child. Babies born to mothers who used depressants or other drugs during pregnancy may be physically dependent on drugs and show severe withdrawal symptoms at birth.