

# LET'S CONNECT

**Kids Help Phone B.C**

**Phone**

1-800-668-6868

**Website**

[www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)

**Alcohol & Drug Information and  
Referral Service**

**Toll-Free (B.C)**

1-800-663-1441

**Lower Mainland**

604-660-9382



## ABOUT ADOLESCENTS AND SUBSTANCE USE

Substance use among adolescents is a critical and pressing societal issue that demands increased awareness and understanding. It is a widespread challenge faced by many young individuals, often perceived as stigmatized or concealed, preventing open discussions about it in our society despite being a prevalent and everyday topic.

# PARENTAL INFLUENCE

Studies by Shakya, Christakis, Fowler (2012) and Curtis et al. (2019).

#### Key Takeaways:

##### Parental Styles Matter:

- Authoritative parenting, marked by warmth and appropriate control, significantly reduces adolescent substance abuse.
- This positive influence extends beyond the immediate family, creating a broader social network deterrent against substance use.

##### Decision-Making Gaps:

- Despite national guidelines, parental actions often fall short of professional recommendations.
- A study of 975 parents reveals a gap between what is advised and what is implemented, contributing to limited adolescent access to substance use treatment.

#### Implications:

##### Education and Early Intervention:

- Emphasize educational efforts for parents to bridge the gap between expert recommendations and actual actions.
- Early intervention strategies are crucial to preventing and addressing adolescent substance use.

##### Public Health Outreach:

- Increase outreach mechanisms to address substance use challenges among adolescents.
- Strengthen public health initiatives targeting parents for a more effective approach to substance use prevention.

By recognizing the impact of parenting styles and addressing decision-making gaps, we can shape effective strategies that emphasize education, early intervention, and targeted public health outreach for a comprehensive solution.





## MEDIA INFLUENCES ON ADOLESCENCE

- Studies based on substance use in prime-time television shows recognized that 71% of episodes depicted alcohol consumption, including 65% of shows for teens containing alcohol use (Scull et al., 2009, p.983).
- Adolescents are now exposed to over 84 references of explicit substance use in popular music every day (Scull et al., 2009, p.983).
- Alcohol and tobacco advertisements have also been shown to have an impact on adolescent substance use, the more exposure young people have to these advertisements, the more likely they are to experiment with substances (Scull et al., 2009).
- Adolescents may engage in substance use or other risky activities to receive praise or social reinforcement from their peers (Vannucci et al., 2020).
- Online videos such as "vape trick videos" may portray substance use as desirable to youth (Vannucci et al., 2020).
- Youth who receive a like after posting something related to substance use will experience an "increased activity in socioeconomic neural processing systems and decreased activity in the neural regions implicate in cognitive control" (Vannucci et al., 2020, p.270), this means that substance use will be associated with positive reward value, and the youth may experience a lack in cognitive control regarding the substance.

## PEER INFLUENCES ON ADOLESCENCE



Adolescent substance use is a rising cause for concern, and has been seen to have multiple negative social and health implications that have been linked to substance use. According to Zuckermann et al. (2020), Youth who report using multiple drugs are more likely to engage in other dangerous behaviors, have worse physical and mental health, and are less likely to complete high school. According to the compass survey conducted by Zuckermann et al., (2020), 39% of the adolescents reported using substances today, and of the 39%, 53% reported using two or more substances, 61% of the adolescents did not report substance usage, but according to 28% of teens who reported substance use, vaping is a popular substance that is most frequently combined with another drug of choice. The stats reported come from 74,501 high school students.

Canada stats reports that 73% of the students in grades 7-12 that have smoked e-cigarettes (vaping) have gotten it from their social sources (friends, parents, peers) and their main reason for the vaping is to relax and relieve stress, because they are addicted and it feels good to get a nicotine high (Canada, 2024).

Alcohol still remains the most popular substance used amongst the youth with the highest prevalence between grades 7-12 in 2021-2022 (Canada, 2024). Youth often taste alcohol for the first time by the age of 13, and 1 in 5 students report consuming more than five drinks in one sitting (Canada, 2024). According to 38% of students, getting alcohol is rather easy for them since their parents or guardians provide the substance when asked, while 18% of students said they can get alcohol during parties (Canada, 2024).

## THE EFFECTS ON THE BRAIN

The human brain does not fully mature until the age of 25 and our adolescent years are a critical developmental stage involving big cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral changes (Lees et al. 2016).

Lees et al. 2020 states that alcohol is the most commonly used substance amongst adolescents and about 38% of adolescents engage in drinking alcohol. Heavy use can cause decrements in memory, attention, and increased speed of information processing (Squeglia et al. 2009). Whereas, adolescents who regularly smoke weed perform lower on tests of learning, cognitive flexibility, visual scanning and memory. Marijuana causes depressive symptoms within the white matter (Squeglia et al. 2009).

Squeglia et al. 2009 states that alcohol use also affects white matter volume, more specifically, white matter tissue development. These tissues hold the responsibility of transferring information from one side of the brain to the other. When an adolescent heavily drinks for extended periods of time, the brains white matter is compromised and alcohol will begin to cause neurocognitive changes and brain expansion leading to higher number of alcohol withdrawal symptoms (Squeglia et al. 2009).

Overall, substance use has a direct affect on the adolescent brain development and function, the longer the substances are used, the greater the consequences.



## SOCW 4660: Addictions and Social Work Practice

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