

Young people, drugs and alcohol: Making safer choices

Information for parents and carers

For further information, advice and support for parents visit our website www.dsmfoundation.org.uk

Definition: Drugs are substances that alter, block, or mimic chemical reactions in the brain. This causes an alteration of the body's normal processes, and can affect your mind, body and behaviour



What's out there for young people?



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Categories of effect

- **Stimulants**

- boost mood and energy
- increase heart rate

- **Hallucinogens**

- alter perception of reality
- alter brain cell communication

- **Depressants**

- cause drowsiness
- slow down brain
- decrease breathing rate

- **Dissociatives**

- give feeling of detachment
- block signals to conscious mind

Risk factors and variables: Drug, Person, Place

The drug: What drug has been taken? Has the user mixed with other drugs, including alcohol or medication? How pure or strong is the drug? (how can you know?) How has the drug been taken? - swallowed, smoked, injected?

To watch: [VICE High Society: the truth about ecstasy](#) (watch from 5:28 to 8:41)

The person: Genetic makeup, family history, gender, metabolism, body mass; allergies; current physical health; current mental health; mood; expectations; tolerance

The place: Who is the person with? Or are they alone? What is the place they are in like? Hot, cold, crowded, scary? What are the people around them like? What are they doing? Are they at risk of having an accident, or at risk of other potential harms, or of causing harm themselves?

Risks of cannabis for young people

Is cannabis safe?

Cannabinoids in cannabis copy the effects of the natural endocannabinoids on the brain. This is why cannabis affects appetite, learning and memory, mood and motivation.

First cannabis-based medicines approved for use on NHS

Charities welcome epilepsy and MS drugs but say thousands of people have been left in limbo



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the guardian

11th November 2019

Cannabis has two main chemicals –

- **CBD** – non-intoxicating; can reduce pain and anxiety; mitigates some of harm of...
- **THC** – causes 'high' and can cause anxiety, paranoia etc



In 2016, 94% of police seizures were high-potency cannabis (very high THC, low CBD) (Kings College London 2018)

To watch:

[Under construction: cannabis and the teenage brain](#)

[FRANK: Cannabis side effects](#)

[BBC Teach: Lorne's experience of smoking cannabis](#)

Is cannabis safe?

1 in 5 of all new cases of psychosis are associated with daily cannabis use, and 1 in 10 with the use of high potency cannabis (Kings College, London, 2019)



Smoking cannabis as a teenager is the strongest factor in later illicit drug use (BMJ 2017)

One in 6 teenagers who smoke cannabis become **dependent** and **25-50% of daily smokers**.

(US National Institute for Drug Abuse 2019)

88% of young people in specialist services are there because of cannabis

(Public Health England 2017)

Drug use, mainly cannabis, linked to five-fold increase in violent crime (Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 2017)



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Registered charity no. 1158921

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Drugs, alcohol and the law

Possession

If you take drugs from your child, you must either destroy them or hand them to the police as soon as possible. By having the drugs in your possession you may be committing an offence.

If you allow the smoking of cannabis, or the use of any other illegal drug in your home, this is also an offence.

As a parent you risk breaking the law by turning a blind eye.



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Supply?

Graduate who supplied friend with the ecstasy that killed her is jailed

Jane Wharton Saturday 13 Oct 2018 9:40 am

461 shares

A graduate has been jailed for supplying the ecstasy that killed her friend as they celebrated the end of their time at university.



To watch:

[BBC3 One Night of Ecstasy](#)

What else could possibly go wrong...?

Drunk and disorderly, assault, breach of the peace, public order offences...

Long-term consequences: travel, university, employment?

40% of 16-24 year-old girls and 31% of boys had had unprotected sex after heavy drinking (BMJ 2016)

If you provide alcohol for under 18s you must have their parents' verbal permission because of the law of Vicarious Liability

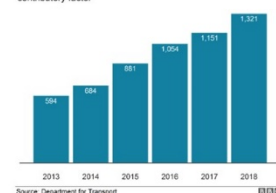


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Nearly 20,000 drivers banned for drug driving Jan18 – Mar19 (DVLA, 2019)
105 people killed and 1,787 injured in accidents in 2017 in which drug use was a contributory factor
(Ministry of Transport 2018)

Drug-driving accidents across Great Britain

Crashes where police attended and drugs were a contributory factor



Adolescent brain development, choice and risk

To watch:

[Prof Frances Jensen: the workings of the adolescent brain](#)

[Sarah Jayne Blakemore: the mysterious workings of the adolescent brain](#)

[Laci Green: The teen brain under construction](#)

[How not to drink: dealing with peer pressure](#)

To read:

The Teenage Brain. A neuroscientist's survival guide to raising adolescents and young adults. Dr Frances E. Jensen with Amy Ellis Nutt. Thorsons ISBN 9780007448319

Blame my Brain. The amazing teenage brain revealed. Nicola Morgan. Walker Books. ISBN 9781406311167

Inventing ourselves. The secret life of the teenage brain. Sarah-Jayne Blakemore. Penguin books. ISBN 9781784161347

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How to Grow a Grown Up. Prepare your teen for the real world. Dr. Dominique Thompson and Fabienne Vailes. Vermilion. ISBN 9781785042782

The Drug Conversation. How to talk to your child about drugs. Dr. Owen Bowden-Jones. The Royal College of Psychiatrists. ISBN 97819097256574

Practical strategies: the xplan

For more information see [here](#)

#xplan
Giving your kids a way out



<https://bertfulks.com/2017/02/23/x-plan-giving-your-kids-a-way-out-xplan/>

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- Agree a simple message that means they need help to get away from a situation, and what they'll use as an excuse their end
- Plan together how they'll get home
- Agree not to pass any judgements or ask any questions (the hard part!)

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For more information, advice and support

Drugs	Frank	Talk to Frank is run by Public Health England to provide information and advice for young people and parents about drugs and alcohol. It has an extensive list of drugs including many common street names, and a live webchat.
	Drugscience	A charity bringing together leading drugs experts from a wide range of specialisms. The website has detailed information about different substances, articles, podcasts and research.
	Drugsand.me	Advice for parents about having conversations with their children as well as detailed harm reduction advice for older teens-plus
	Say Why to Drugs podcasts	A series of podcasts with Dr Suzi Gage, an academic psychologist and epidemiologist, providing non-judgmental and research-based information about drugs and issues relating to drugs and alcohol in conversation with a range of people involved in the field.
Alcohol	Alcohol Education Trust	An alcohol education charity providing evidence-based resources for young people (11-18yrs), their parents and teachers. The website has a range of useful information for parents, and access to planning and resources for alcohol education lessons for teacher.
	Drinkaware	A charity providing information, advice and tools to help people make better choices about drinking, including for parents.
Support for parents and families	Drugfam	A charity providing support for families, friends and partners who have a family member dependent on drugs or alcohol, and for those who have been bereaved by addiction or related causes. Their helpline is 0300 888 3853
	Adfam	A charity working to improve life for families affected by drugs and alcohol use, providing information, advice and support online and about local support groups for families.
	Teen Tips	Provides online and onsite courses, podcasts and resources to equip parents and educators with the knowledge, confidence and skills to support young people as they navigate a range of issues.
Mental health	Young Minds	Information and advice about issues relating to mental health, including for advice and a helpline for parents 0808-802-5544, and a text alert system for young people - text YM to 85258

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	<u>Student Minds</u>	A page of FAQs for parents of children at - or going to - university, as well as information about how students can access support and advice themselves.
General	<u>Rise Above</u>	Run by Public Health England to provide information and resources for 11-16 year-olds on a range of topics relating to their health and wellbeing. It includes interactive games, videos and information.
	<u>The Mix</u>	A charity offering a free and confidential multi-channel service for 13-25 year olds on a range of issues that might affect them, including drugs and alcohol via their phone, email, peer to peer and counselling services.
	<u>Festivalsafe</u>	A website providing a range of information and advice about how to stay safe at festivals.

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