



TEEN GIRLS. MORE LIKELY TO PERCEIVE BENEFITS IN DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

The 2009 *Partnership Attitude Tracking Study* (PATS) survey, issued by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America and MetLife Foundation, found that teenage girls are more likely than teenage boys to perceive potential benefits from drug use and drinking, making teen girls more vulnerable to drug and alcohol abuse.

Findings also indicate that teen girls are more likely to associate “self-

medicating” benefits with drinking and getting high.

The research indicates that more than two-thirds of teen girls responded positively to the question “using drugs helps kids deal with problems at home” and more than half reported that drugs help teens forget their troubles. Stress has been identified as a key factor leading to drinking, smoking and drug use among girls and more than three times as many young

girls as boys reported having symptoms of depression in the latest research findings.

The PATS data also point to upswings in use of drugs that teens are likely to encounter at parties and in other social situations, with noteworthy and dramatic increases in alcohol use among girls. Teenage girls’ alcohol use increased 11 percent in 2009 – significantly higher, when compared to the increase in boys’ drinking over the same time period.



What this means is that parents of teen girls have to be especially attentive to their daughters’ moods and mental health needs, which can have a direct effect on their child’s decision to risk her health by getting high and drinking. Parents can help prevent alcohol and drug abuse by recognizing and addressing their daughters’ worries and stresses, by supporting positive decisions

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and by taking immediate action if they suspect or know their daughter has been experimenting with drugs and alcohol.

Discovering that a teen is using drugs or drinking is often a frightening experience for parents – many feel alone, ashamed, and confused about what to do next.

NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc. can provide parents and caregivers with free, anonymous access to the most current, research-based information on how to help their child and their family take the next steps. And, NCADD can provide presentations to community organizations on topics relating to youth abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Call our offices today for more information at 732-254-3344. Of course, parents and caregivers are encouraged to have frequent, ongoing conversations with their children about the dangers of drug and alcohol use and to take early action if they think their child is using or might have a problem.



Times of Transition: Increased Risk

There are specific times in a child's life that place him or her at increased risk for using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs...heading back to school is one of them. If your child is entering middle school, high school or moving to a new school, you will need to be especially vigilant. But even a change in grade level, teachers, coaches or friends may be cause enough for added stress that can also lead to experimentation with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

While we know every child is at-risk for using substances, the danger triples for a young person entering high school. For youth entering middle school, the threat is also alarming, as this is an equally high time of transition. Most kids in younger grades tend to have strong anti-substance use attitudes. But the move to middle and high school brings with it a shift in attitudes, due in part, to increased exposure to other students who may be drinking, smoking and using other drugs. Many of these kids are older or are considered popular and may appeal to your child's natural desire to be like them and be liked by them. The many changes that accompany a new school year calls for parents to be especially aware.

Here are a few very basic tips:

1. Be active and supportive in your child's daily life - even as they become more independent.
2. Ask questions about substance use and reinforce no use messages using teachable moments, not lectures.
3. Make clear your expectations and consequences for breaking rules - and stick to them.
4. Know where your child is and who he or she is with - a quick check-in from your child via cell phone is simple for you both.
5. Do not allow your child to hang out with friends unsupervised. Ensure an adult is in the home for teen gatherings.

Source: How to Raise a Drug-Free Kid: The Straight Dope for Parents. Joseph A. Califano, Jr., 2009.

Study: Outcomes are Worse for Daughters of Affected Women vs. Other Parent-Child Pairings

Recent findings from a Yale University research project found that the risk for children of an alcoholic parent developing a psychiatric illness later in life may depend, in part, on their gender and whether it was their mother or father who was alcohol-dependent. The link appears to be strongest between mothers and daughters.

It was already known that the adult children of alcoholic parents are at increased risk for psychiatric illnesses, but the effects of child or parent gender weren't well known.

Researchers analyzed data from more than 23,000 males and almost 17,400 females included in the *U.S. National Epidemiological Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions*.

The study found that the mother-daughter connection was most influential in increasing a daughter's risk for mania, nicotine dependence, alcohol abuse and schizoid personality disorder.

While not as strong, there was also increased risk of psychiatric illnesses among the adult children of alcoholic parents in

father-son, father-daughter, and mother-son pairings.

The research found that the problems caused by alcoholism are not limited to the individual who suffers from it.

Children are particularly susceptible to the negative effects of alcoholism in a parent, and adult children of alcoholics are in general at much greater risk for developing every type of psychiatric illness.

The key, new finding of this work is that the effect parental alcoholism has on children is different depending on the gender of the alcoholic parent and the gender of the child.

The study results have proven important in two additional ways.

First, these findings reiterate how damaging alcoholism can be to the mental health of children who grow up with an alcoholic parent.

Second, and particular to this study, these findings indicate that in a family with an alcoholic mother, daughters may

be at greater relative risk for developing psychiatric problems. Such information could be used to identify parents at potentially greater risk for certain disorders and could be used to encourage reduction of substance abuse in parents.

SOURCE: Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research, news release, July 20, 2010.



Staff

Steven G. Liga
MSW, LSW, LCADC, CPS, CCS
CEO & Executive Director
Lizette Fallon, BS
Financial Manager
Ezra Helfand, BA
Public Information Specialist

East Brunswick Office

Lisette M. Bacharde
Administrative Assistant
Al-Karim Campbell, BA
Preventionist I
Padma Sonti Desai, MA
Preventionist I
Dara Jarosz, MA, SAC
Clinician I
Alexandra Lopez
MA, LCADC, SAC, CPS, DRCC
Course Development Specialist/Supervisor
Christina Rak-Samson, BA
Preventionist I
Linda Surks, BS, CPS
Preventionist II
Jason Victor, BA, CPS
Preventionist II
Heather Ward, MSW, LSW
Preventionist I

Carteret Office

Lauren Balkan, MSW, LCSW
Program Director
Christine Hughes, MSW, LSW
Preventionist I
Anna Kirzner MSW, LCSW
Clinician II
Lindsay Rich, MSW, LCSW
Clinician II
Dana Tosk, BA
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NEWS YOU SHOULD KNOW AND USE

Parents Who Use Drugs to Quell Children Called Abusive

Sedating children with over-the-counter or prescription medications may be an under-recognized form of abuse.

Researchers who looked at data from the National Poison Data System found an average of 160 cases of 'malicious administration' of pharmaceuticals to children per year, with 1,439 cases between 2000 and 2008. The study found that 14 percent of cases resulted in injuries and 18 kids died.

Sedatives were the most common drug administered, but parents also gave kids antidepressants, stimulants, and antipsychotics. The findings were reported in the *Journal of Pediatrics*.

The above report was provided by Join Together, a program of the Boston University School of Public Health and the nation's leading provider of information, strategic planning assistance, and leadership development for community-based efforts to advance effective alcohol and drug policy, prevention, and treatment. To learn more about this organization and to subscribe to their newsletters, please go to the Join Together website at www.jointogether.org.

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) of Middlesex County, Inc. is a private, non-profit, community-based health organization providing prevention, education, information and referral services to county residents, businesses, schools, faith-based organizations, municipal alliances, and social service agencies since 1980.

NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc.
152 Tices Lane
East Brunswick, NJ 08816
732-254-3344
www.ncadd-middlesex.org

