

Data collected about drug use among Mississippi's teens show that fewer teens are taking drugs like cocaine, heroin, and marijuana, but the use of prescription drugs and inhalants is rising. More than ever, parents must be alert to their children's activities and be prepared to take action where needed.

The 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey* revealed:

- 35.9% of Mississippi students in grades 9-12 stated that they had tried marijuana.
- 16.7% of Mississippi students taking the survey had used marijuana one or more times in the month prior to the survey.
- 5.2% of Mississippi students reported having used cocaine.
- 12.6% of Mississippi students said they had used inhalants

A report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) using 2006 survey data indicated that 6.79% of 12 to 17 year-olds and 10.36 % of 18-25 year-olds in Mississippi abused pain relievers. The survey did not research abuse of other prescribed medications.

Monitoring by The Partnership for a Drug-Free America concludes that every day 2,500 teens use a prescription drug to get high for the first time. The drugs are accessed from home — a drawer, pantry or medicine cabinet.

Mississippi penalties for possession of controlled substances are outlined in the Uniform Controlled Substances Law. For example, Code Section 41-29-139(b)(3) states that offenders may be imprisoned up to three years and fined up to \$3,000 for possession of one ounce or less of marijuana.

Mississippi penalties for a broader range of offenses can be found at www.crimeandpunishment.net.

**The Youth Risk Behavior Survey is developed and administered every two years by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).*

Where To Find Help Or Information

Mississippi Department of Mental Health Bureau of Alcohol & Drug Abuse

Phone: 601-359-1288 • Fax: 601-359-6295
24 hours a day every day / Toll-Free 1-877-210-8513
www.dmh.state.ms.us

Mississippi Community Mental Health Centers Regions 1-15

Call toll free, 877-210-8513, for the center closest to you
or visit http://www.dmh.state.ms.us/community_care.htm

What a Difference a Friend Makes by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

www.whatadifference.org
<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

National Institute on Drug Abuse

<http://www.drugabuse.gov> • <http://teens.drugabuse.gov>

Parents: The Anti-Drug

<http://www.theantidrug.com>

The Partnership for a Drug-Free America

212-922-1560

<http://www.drugfree.org/parent>

National Crime and Punishment Learning Center

(228) 896-8696

www.crimeandpunishment.net



Attorney General Jim Hood



For comprehensive information about drug symptoms by drug category, see the **GUIDE TO CHILD SAFETY: A Parent's PLAN**, a booklet published by the Mississippi Attorney General's Office. The publication is available online at www.agjimhood.com.

Youth Drug Abuse



What Parents Should Know

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Youth Drug Abuse: *You Can Make a Difference*

Nationally, the overall use of illicit drugs is down, but the illegal use of prescription drugs is up among teens. Teens also are experimenting more with ecstasy, hallucinogens such as LSD, and heroin/opiates.

This trend is documented in a 2007 Survey by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). In the survey, 15.4% of high school seniors reported nonmedical use of at least one prescription medication within the past year. Prescription drugs include amphetamines, sedatives/barbiturates, tranquilizers, and opiates such as Vicodin and OxyContin.

The study also showed that the lessening concern among teens about the harmful effects of the illegal drug ecstasy has resulted in increased use of the drug. Use of ecstasy increased between 2004 and 2007 among 10th-graders from 2.4 to 3.5%. Among 12th graders, ecstasy use between 2005 and 2007 surged from 3.0 to 4.5%.

While the results confirm that teen drug use is a problem, it is also important to remember that many of the symptoms of substance abuse mimic common characteristics of young people as they grow and mature, especially in adolescence. Extreme caution must be exercised to avoid mistaking normal adolescent behavior as symptomatic of drug use.

A special website for teens, <http://teens.drugabuse.gov>, provides details about the harmful effects of taking drugs. For instance, it notes that ecstasy can cause confusion, depression, sleep problems, intense fear and anxiety that can last for days or weeks (in regular drug users). High doses of the drug can increase the body's temperature and cause dehydration, a condition that can lead to heart problems, seizures, liver failure, and kidney failure. Although research is inconclusive at this point, brain imaging research shows that the use

of ecstasy over time may harm a person's brain function, according to NIDA.

The Partnership for a Drug-Free America notes that 12 to 17 year-olds abuse prescription drugs more than they abuse ecstasy, crack cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine combined. The group also points out that 60% of teens who abuse legally prescribed drugs did so before age 15, and that the number of new teen prescription drug abusers rivals the number of new teen users of marijuana.

Teens who abuse prescription medications have their own language, with terms such as "pharming" (getting high on prescription medications acquired at home) and "pharm parties" (where teens get together and mix their parents' prescription drugs into a big bowl for sharing). The Partnership for a Drug-Free America notes that a major driving force behind "pharming" is teens' misconception that the medications are not harmful, and easy access at home contributes to the problem.

Symptoms of Drug Use

According to the experts, the period just after an individual uses drugs is likely to be characterized by mood and behavioral swings – first euphoria, perhaps some unusual activity and/or excessive talking, sometimes a tendency to appear serene, often followed by a state of depression and withdrawal. Many of the symptoms of illegal drug use are found in teens abusing prescription drugs. Other symptoms include:

- Poor school performance; skipping school.
- Inability to cope well with daily events.
- Lack of attention to hygiene, grooming, and dress.
- Long periods of solitude.
- Extremely defensive, negative, argumentative.

- Frequent conflicts with others; verbally/physically abusive.
- Sudden withdrawal from long-time friends/family/activities.
- Showing disregard for others.
- Socializing with peers who may be drug users.
- Showing unusual tension or depression.
- Increasing need for money; stealing/shoplifting.
- Being insincere, lying, conning, untrustworthy.
- Stooped appearance and posture.
- Dull or watery eyes; dilated or pinpoint pupils.
- Overt indicators of substance abuse (e.g., drug equipment, needle marks).

Parents Can Help

As in most matters, parents play a crucial role in preventing drug abuse and in intervening when illegal drug use or prescription drug abuse occur. Research shows there is less likelihood for children to become involved with drugs when there is:

- a strong bond between children and parents.
- parental involvement in the child's life.
- clear limits and consistent enforcement of discipline.

To help prevent prescription drug abuse, parents should actively keep up with, and safely dispose of, their legally prescribed medications. Discussions about the harmful effects of drug abuse should include prescription medications.

Staying alert in general is always a good practice, remembering that certain circumstances can make children more vulnerable to illegal drug use. These include transitions such as moving from elementary to middle school, from middle school to high school, and leaving home to go to college or work. Divorce, re-marriage and other family situations also can make children more susceptible. Education of parents, children and community is vital in helping establish a climate that protects children from illegal drug use.

FACT: Rules and consistent discipline can help prevent drug abuse among children.