• Fifty-two Percent of high school students admit to using alcohol in the past month, and 33% reported binge driving (5 or more drinks at a time). One quarter used marijuana in the past month, and 20% said they had sniffed or inhaled intoxicating substances. More than one third of high school students reported smoking cigarettes within the past month.

• Rates of substance use increase with age are slightly higher for males and for white adolescents. Other mental health problems (e.g., anxiety and depression) frequently coexist with substance use and abuse. Adolescents might use substances in an attempt to treat these and help themselves feel better.

• Common signs of substance use include changes in peer group, decrease in school performance, changes in sleep patterns frequent respiratory and gastrointestinal complaints, and an increase in behavior problems, including stealing money or other valuables.

• Risk Factors
  Peer group use of alcohol and other drugs
  Family conflict, substance abuse, parenting problems
  Physical or sexual abuse
  Lack of other activities
  Poor coping skills
  Poor self-esteem

Children/teens with substance use disorders need evaluation and treatment:

Substance abuse is defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, as; “A maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, and manifested by 1 or more of the following, occurring within a 12-month period:

  1) Recurrent substance use resulting in failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home,

  2) Recurrent substance use in situations in which it is physically hazardous,

  3) Recurrent substance-related legal problems

  4) Continued substance use despite having persistent or recurrent social interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of the substance.”
Differences between Use and Abuse:

- Children/teens that use substance on a few occasion are typically curious about “how it feels.”
- Experimentation can be described as using a substance more than a few times; usually this occurs at parties or in response to peer pressure.
- Regular use is when a child/teen uses substances every few weeks or more and it begins to affect functioning.
- Abuse is extensive use that impacts daily functioning with negative consequences.
- Dependency is when a child’s/teen’s life revolves around getting and using substances (the child/teen can be psychologically or physiologically dependent).

If you believe that your child is using or abusing alcohol or drugs, talk to his/her health care provider about it right away.

How to Help Prevent Substance Use in Your Child:

- Help your child learn to problem-solve and find resources to address their challenges.
- Define position on at-risk behaviors (e.g., zero tolerance for drug or alcohol use).
- Frequently communicate expectations to children regarding behaviors and school performance.
- Get to know your child’s friends and parents of their friends.
- Require at least 48 hour advance notice for sleep over events as most drug parties fall together at the last minute.
- Be available for your child; take time to listen.

For more information, access [www.familysamsha.gov](http://www.familysamsha.gov) and [www.monitoringthefuture.org](http://www.monitoringthefuture.org)