



# Clinical Technical Assistance: Youth Awareness (Ages 12-17)

## Prevalence<sup>1</sup>

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) conducts an annual study of the substance use trends among adolescents, college students, and high school graduates. The following findings represent students in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades across the United States who completed surveys in 2019.

- Vaping continues to increase significantly among adolescents.
- Marijuana is the substance most used among this demographic.
- Youth appear to be moving away from opioid misuse.
- Males have slightly higher rates of substance use than their female peers, particularly in 12th grade.
- Prescription opioids are used more by males than females in the 12th grade.
- Previously, White students had significantly higher rates of substance use than African American and Hispanic students, but that difference has decreased.
- White students generally use substances such as hallucinogens, synthetic marijuana and prescription drugs significantly more than African American students.
- Students who do not intend to attend college are at significantly greater risk of misusing substances, heavy drinking and smoking cigarettes.

## Overdose Risks

- Youth with **two or more substance use disorders are three times more likely** to have a history of surviving an overdose compared to same-aged peers with only one substance use disorder.<sup>5</sup>
- Overdose risk factors:
  - » history of being prescribed a tranquilizer
  - » intranasal opioid use
  - » injecting tranquilizers
  - » injection drug use within the previous 90 days
  - » history of inpatient psychiatric treatment.<sup>5</sup>

## Adolescent Development

- Substance use impacts adolescents' growth and development, particularly brain development.<sup>2</sup>
- Adolescents are experiencing an increased desire for autonomy and the development of their identity<sup>3</sup>
- The developmental processes occurring during adolescence increases the likelihood of risk taking and trying out new experiences.<sup>4</sup>
- Provide opportunities to learn and practice decision-making skills to utilize when experiencing emotionally charged situations, such as peer pressure.<sup>4</sup>



### Integrating Harm Reduction

- Adolescent substance use frequently occurs with other risky behaviors, such as dangerous driving and unprotected sex.<sup>2</sup>
- Explore ways to safely take risks, preferably under adult supervision, to pursue personal growth rather than unhealthy actions.<sup>4</sup>
- When parents/caregivers or the justice system are involved, they may not be receptive of a harm reduction approach. Provide education and explain how harm reduction can be beneficial as a starting point.

### Clinical Considerations

- Be mindful of developmental processes - Support the desire for autonomy while integrating healthy choices and behaviors.
  - » “You’re right, you aren’t a kid anymore. Let’s look at how you can make your own decisions in a way that doesn’t lead to negative outcomes.”
- Explore the pressure from peers - Practice how to say “no” when offered, set boundaries, and cope with any negative responses from peers when declining substances.
  - » “You shared that it’s hard for you to say no when you’re with your friends. I’d like us to practice how you can say no and set boundaries with them.”
- Utilize Motivational Interviewing - Adolescent clients are likely receiving services due to the pressure or direction of an adult (parent, justice system, etc.), utilize MI to meet them where they are to engage in services.
  - » “I understand this is the last place you want to be right now. Since you’re required to do this service, let’s see what we can do to make this more of what you want. Is there anything you’d like to work on, or anything you’d like to work on changing?”

### Screening Tools for Adolescents

- Screening to Brief Intervention (S2BI) -
  - <https://www.drugabuse.gov/ast/s2bi/#/>
- Brief Screener for Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drugs (BSTAD) -
  - <https://www.drugabuse.gov/ast/bstad/#/>
- CRAFFT - <http://craftt.org/>
- APA Adapted NM ASSIST -
  - <https://www.drugabuse.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals/screening-tools-resources/american-psychiatric-association-adapted-nida-modified-assist-tools>
- Drug Abuse Screen Test (DAST-20: Adolescent version) - For use of this tool please contact Dr. Harvey Skinner ([hskinner@yorku.ca](mailto:hskinner@yorku.ca))



### Additional Resources:

CDC – Adolescence (15-17 years old) - <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/adolescence2.html>

CDC – Young Teens (12-14 years old) Development - <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/adolescence.html>

NIDA - 2019 Overview the Sponsored by The National Institute on Drug Abuse at The National Institutes of Health Key Findings on Adolescent Drug Use - <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org//pubs/monographs/mtf-overview2019.pdf>

NIDA - Monitoring the Future 2019 Survey Results: Overall Findings - <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/trends-statistics/infographics/monitoring-future-2019-survey-results-overall-findings>

### References

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2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Teen Substance Use & Risks Web site. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/features/teen-substance-use.html>. Updated 02/10/2020. Accessed 07/16/2020, 2020.
3. Walz GR, Bleuer JC. Best Practices: Substance Use Disorder Treatment for Adolescents. VISTAS Online. 2014.
4. Winters KC, Arria A. Adolescent Brain Development and Drugs. Prev Res. 2011;18(2):21-24.
5. Yule AM, Carrellas NW, Fitzgerald M, et al. Risk Factors for Overdose in Treatment-Seeking Youth with Substance Use Disorders. The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry. 2018;79(3).

