

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS



Athlone Drug Awareness Group

What is a Drug?

A drug is a substance people take
other than food that alters
the way you **THINK, FEEL OR BEHAVE**

Myths & Facts

“A GLASS OF GUINNESS IS GOOD FOR PREGNANCY”

– MYTH

Fact: There is no known safe level of alcohol use in pregnancy – so stopping completely is best. The effects of drinking alcohol during pregnancy may not be seen until your child is a few years old. Children exposed to alcohol during pregnancy often show poor attention and hyperactivity.

Source: www.healthpromotion.ie

“CANNABIS IS NOT BAD FOR YOU”

– MYTH

Fact: Smoking cannabis increases your risk of heart disease and cancers such as lung cancer and may also affect your fertility. In people who have an underlying mental health problem, cannabis use may trigger schizophrenia. In Ireland, it is the second most common drug found in the systems of drink drivers, after alcohol.

Source: www.drugs.ie

“GIVING A CHILD A SMALL AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL IN THEIR EARLY TEENS WILL GIVE THEM A RESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE TO ALCOHOL”

– MYTH

Fact: Research shows that people who drink before they turn 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependency than those who start drinking at the age of 21.

Source: “Straight Talk – A Guide for Parents on Teenage Drinking” - H.S.E. Health Promotion Unit (2006)

IN 2010, THE AVERAGE IRISH
PERSON AGED 15+ YEARS DRANK
11.9 LITRES OF PURE ALCOHOL
= 44 BOTTLES OF VODKA, 470 PINTS
OR 124 BOTTLES OF WINE.

Source: Alcohol Action
Ireland 2010



MIXING DRUGS CAN BE DANGEROUS
BECAUSE THE EFFECTS AND SIDE
EFFECTS ARE ADDED TOGETHER.

This includes mixing illegal drugs
with legal drugs such as alcohol or
medication. **Source:** Know the Facts
About Drugs, HSE



THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN
DELAYING TEENAGERS FROM USING
DRUGS IS POSITIVE PARENTING.

Parents who talk to their children about
drugs and know what they are doing
and who they are with can reduce the
chances of their children using drugs

Source: Don't Lose the
Head – NCCDA, 2008

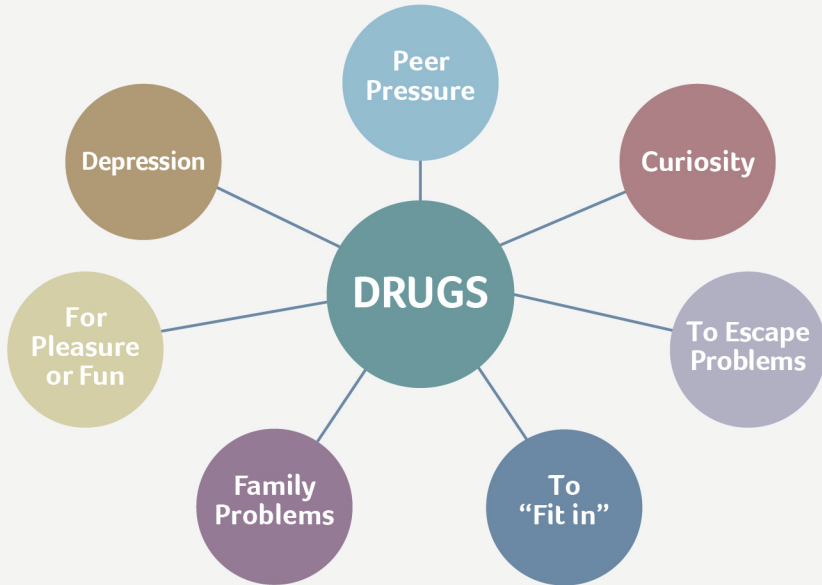


MOST YOUNG PEOPLE ARE
INTRODUCED TO ILLEGAL DRUGS BY
A FRIEND OR SOMEONE THEY KNOW.

In many cases drugs are 'pulled'
rather than 'pushed' – the person
asks for it themselves, often out of
curiosity. **Source:** Know the Facts
About Drugs, HSE



Why do Young People take Alcohol & Drugs?



Risk & Protective Factors

PEER INFLUENCES

- Deviant peer behaviour
- Knowledge about substance use
- Early tobacco use
- Early sexual activity

INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS

- Early tobacco/alcohol use
- Low commitment to school
- Early peer rejection
- Impairments
- Early behavioural problems

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Positive adult relationships
- Cohesive family unit
- Consistent parent-child discipline
- Links with social values and groups

FAMILY FACTORS

- Parental drug use
- Parental criminality
- Hostility/conflict in the home
- Lack of/inconsistent discipline
- Excessive punishment
- Family disruption

COMMUNITY FACTORS

- Neighbourhood crime
- Lack of community support
- Community disorganisation
- Acceptance/ availability of drugs
- Lack of academic, recreational or sport programmes

Source: National Youth Health Programme 2002

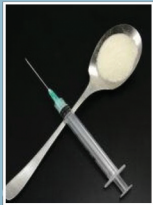
What you need to know about Drugs



STIMULANT

- **“Stimulates”** mental and/or physical reactions in the body.
- Increased breathing, heart rate and brain activity.
- Increased mental and physical reactions.
- Make a person feel excited, have extra energy and alertness.

E.g. Ecstasy, Cocaine, Nicotine, Red Bull.



DEPRESSANTS/SEDATIVES

Opposite effects to stimulants

- Slow down breathing, heart rate and brain activity.
- Slow down mental and physical reactions.
- Make a person feel relaxed and uninhibited.

E.g. Alcohol, Heroin, Benzodiazepines.



HALLUCINOGENS

Cause “hallucinations”

- Alter perception and senses particularly vision, thought and emotion.
- Person will experience unreal images and psychedelic colours.
- Some stimulant and depressant drugs may fall under this category.

E.g. Magic Mushrooms, LSD, Ecstasy, Amphetamines.



SOLVENTS

- Most common amongst younger adolescents (10-13 years) in Ireland.
- Substance is inhaled/sniffed.
- The user may appear to be drunk or disorientated/alcohol like intoxication.

E.g. Butane Gas, Petrol, Glue, Deodorant, Permanent Markers, Nail Varnish Remover.

Signs & Symptoms

You want your kids to be healthy and responsible. However, many parents find it difficult to spot the signs of drug use, especially since many of the signs and symptoms listed are common in teenage behaviour and adolescence.

FAMILY

- Starting arguments
- Change in attitude
- Breaking rules
- Withdrawing from family members

EMOTIONAL

- Personality change
- Sudden mood change
- Irritability
- Depression
- General lack of interest

PHYSICAL

- Fatigue
- Repeated health complaints
- Red and glazed eyes
- Lasting cough

MENTAL

- Mood swings
- Aggression
- Panicky/Anxious
- Depression
- Loss of interest in important things

SCHOOL

- Decreased interest
- Negative attitudes
- Drop in grade
- Absence
- Bad behaviour

Source: Crosscare, Don't Lose the Head & HSE Parents Booklet.

Start the talking – Tips for parents

The world has changed since we were teenagers. Teens today are faced with various problems and pressures. We cannot ignore these things and we should not ignore these things. We need to be open about the possible risks they may take, they need support and advice.

We must listen to them if we are expecting them to listen to us!!

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Listen to their point of view.

POSITIVE MESSAGES HELP

Your behaviour will influence your child most. Don't expect them not to drink/smoke if you do it in front of them.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Children and young people who have hobbies and interests may be less likely to get involved in drugs.

CHANGE THE WAY YOU TALK TO THEM

If they only ever hear you interrogating them they will stop listening. A chat before they go out can make a real difference.

UNDERSTAND

They may be behaving badly, they may be moody, angry or aggressive because they can't put their worries into words.

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY

Teens often hit out at the people they love and trust, not because they hate you but because they feel confused, stressed or uncertain.

Alcohol



- Alcohol is not an ordinary product or grocery. One person in Ireland dies every seven hours from an alcohol-related illness. **Source:** Alcohol Action Ireland
- 79% of young people between the ages of 12-18 years disagree with their parents drinking alcohol and becoming drunk in front of them. **Source:** ISPC 2010
- 10% of young people say that their parents drinking affects their lives. **Source:** ISPC 2010
- Parents need to recognise that their own drinking patterns are a signpost for their children regarding alcohol use in general. **Source:** ISPC 2010
- A report by the Office of Tobacco Control (2006) revealed that Irish 16 to 17 year olds spend an average of €20.09+ per week on alcohol. This amounts to an illegal alcohol market of €145m in this country.
- Alcohol is often a factor in suicidal behaviour. In 2006/2007 alcohol was a factor in 41% of all cases of deliberate self-harm. **Source:** Alcohol Action Ireland

Risky Situations

Part of what you can do as a parent is to set limits. Let your kids know that you do not want them in risky situations.

“You know I love you and care about you but I am your parent, not one of your friends. I will not put up with you being in a place where drugs might be used.”

“I do not want you getting in a car with a driver that has been drinking or taking drugs.”

“It is my job to keep you safe, so I am going to ask you questions about whom you are with and what you are doing.”

IT'S NOT PESTERING... IT IS PARENTING...

Source: Office of National Drug Control Policy, 1998

What to do if your child admits using drugs?

DON'T PANIC:

Overreacting will make your child less willing to talk to you and tell you exactly what has happened. Talk calmly to your child and try to find out what happened.

GET THE FACTS:

Talk to your child and find out which drug has been taken and how often. Your child may have been experimenting with the drug and has since stopped using it.

SHOW YOUR CONCERN:

Remind your child that you love them and that you are there for them. Make it clear you do not like him or her taking drugs or alcohol.

CHOOSE YOUR MOMENT:

If you try to discuss your child's drug use with them when they are intoxicated or under the influence and if you are possibly angry, it is likely that the discussion will turn into an argument. Wait until they are no longer under the influence of the drug and you feel calmer.

COMMUNICATION:

Keep the lines of communication open. Nothing will change if the communication breaks down. Our children always need to know that we are there to listen and talk to them. We also need to make sure that they understand they are responsible for what they do.

SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP:

Sometimes we may need the help and support of professionals who are trained in this area.

Services & Supports

THE FOLLOWING SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE IN ATHLONE

Merchants Quay Ireland

Family Support	085 2749983
Rehabilitation & Aftercare	087 9328468
Outreach Harm Reduction Service	087 9512989
Open Door- Drop in Service	090 6417097

Ana Liffey Drug Project	1800 786828
HSE Drugs Helpline	1800 459459
Drugs/HIV Helpline email	helpline@hse.ie
Suicide Prevention Officer	086 8157850
HSE Health Promotion Service	057 9357817
Drug Education Co-ordinator	090 6448947
Athlone Drug Awareness Group	085 2353111

Gardaí

Community Gardai	090 64 98550
------------------	--------------

Youth Projects

Midland Regional Youth Service	
Youth Information Service	090 64 77075
Foróige	www.foroige.ie
Gateway Project	086 0279149

HSE CADS (Community Alcohol & Drugs Service)

Athlone	090 64 24820
---------	--------------

Methadone maintenance programme / Urinalysis

Addiction Counselling

Out Patient Psychiatric Service

Alternative Therapies

Community Detox for Methadone & Benzodiazepines

INFORMATION

www.mrdatf.ie
www.athlonedrugawareness.com
www.gatewayproject.ie
www.mrys.org
www.spunout.ie
www.drugs.ie
www.hse.ie

Membership of Athlone Local Drugs Network

- Westmeath Community Development
- Athlone Garda Siochana
- HSE Health Promotion Officer
- Battery Heights Family Resource Centre
- Substance Use Education Co-ordinator
- Rapid Co-Ordinator
- Public Representatives
- Concerned Parents
- School Staff Rep
- Athlone Drug Awareness Group

NEED HELP?

GET HELP!!

**Supports & Services
Pg 11**