



## Reasons why you should choose not to use

- Death
  - Liver disease
  - Cancer
  - Emphysema
  - Brain damage
  - Prison
  - Memory loss
  - Weakened immune system
  - Kidney failure
  - Weight fluctuation
  - High blood pressure
  - Heart attack and disease
  - Psychosis
  - Loss of ambition
  - Respiratory failure
  - Expense
  - Asphyxiation
- Think it couldn't happen to you? People now suffering with terminal health problems or serving prison sentences thought so, too.
- Even casual use can lead to the problems listed above and countless others.

If you have or someone you know has a substance-abuse problem, seek help immediately. Inform a trusted adult, such as a parent, teacher, coach, clergy member, counselor or doctor, or call a crisis hotline.

### *For more information on drug abuse:*

**Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups**  
888-4AL-ANON (425-2666)  
al-anon.alateen.org

**National Capital Treatment and Recovery**  
888-671-9392  
phoenixhouse.org

**The National Institute on Drug Abuse**  
301-443-1124  
teens.drugabuse.gov  
drugabuse.gov

**Partnership to End Addiction**  
855-378-4373  
Text 55753 for help  
drugfree.org

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
877-696-6775  
hhs.gov

**SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug Abuse**  
1-877-SAMHSA-7 (726-4727)  
samhsa.gov



## THE AMERICAN LEGION

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# GATEWAY DRUGS

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*Choose not to use.*



## Gateway drugs

The American Legion is concerned about young people using drugs and destroying their lives.

Alcohol, tobacco, inhalants and marijuana are often readily available and considered the entryway to a life of drug-dependency and delinquency. Using these gateway drugs is dangerous and can lead to drug abuse and addiction, plus more serious drugs such as heroin, cocaine and LSD can lead to injury or even death.

Substance abuse ruins lives and often the lives of their friends and family. The peer pressure can be intense.

Remember, you are the one ultimately responsible for your decisions in life. The choices you make today, could have consequences tomorrow.

Be informed! Make the choice to choose not to use and live a healthy lifestyle. After all, you are worth it!

## Choose not to use

### Alcohol

- Purchasing or drinking alcohol is illegal for anyone under 21 in all 50 states.
- Youth who start drinking before age 15 are six times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who begin drinking at, or after, age 21, according to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).
- Every year approximately 10,000 young people aged 15 to 24 are killed in alcohol-related incidents such as homicides, suicides and drowning.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for those aged 15 to 20. About a quarter of car crashes with teens involve an underage drinking driver according to MADD.

### Tobacco

- Available in many forms, tobacco delivers nicotine to the body. Once hooked, this addiction can be one of the hardest to break.
- There is no safe form of tobacco use.
- Cigarette smoking causes more than 480,000 deaths in the United States every year, according to the American Lung Association.
- Many complications associated with tobacco manifest later in life, giving young users false assurances of good health.
- The following are according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: nearly nine out of 10 adults who smoke cigarettes daily first try smoking by age 18; each day in the United States about 1,600 youth smoke their first cigarette and nearly 200 youth start smoking every day; and users who started smoking before 15 are seven times more likely to use cocaine than non-smokers.

- Smokeless tobacco is not a safe alternative to smoking.

### Inhalants

- Inhaling or “huffing” solvents, gases, nitrates and commercial chemicals can cause immediate death or other irreversible damage.
- Inhaling can cause permanent damage to the brain and nervous system, and can decrease intellectual function and coordination.
- Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome causes more than half of inhalation deaths and can occur anytime while inhaling, according to drugrehab.com.

### Marijuana

- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main mood-altering chemical found in marijuana, impairs intellectual function, memory, judgment and motor skills.
- According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, marijuana smokers inhale up to four times as much tar as cigarette smokers do.
- THC adversely affects the brain, lungs, heart, reproductive and immune systems.
- Marijuana can impair growth and development.
- Loss of inhibition from the use of marijuana can lead to injuries and death.
- Studies show marijuana users are often lower achievers compared to non-users. In fact, the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics report that about 1 in 6 people who start using marijuana as a teen, and 25-50 percent of those who use it every day, become addicted to marijuana.