

Facts About Underage Substance Use

WHY DOES GUIDING GOOD CHOICES EMPHASIZE SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION?

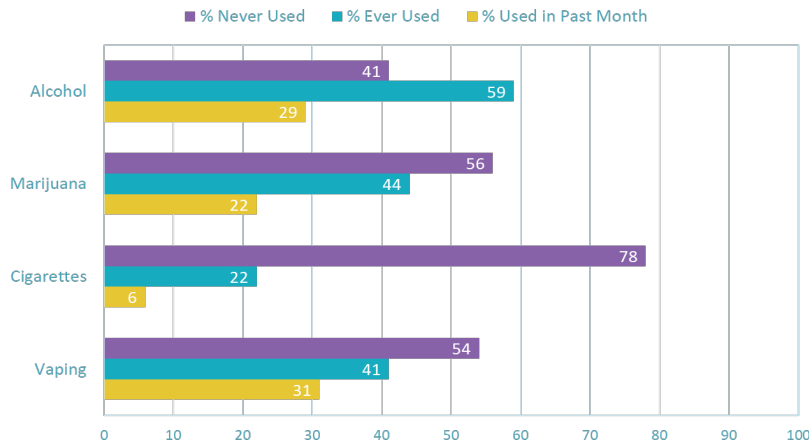
Guiding Good Choices (GGC) focuses on substance use prevention because underage substance use is the most common problem behavior during the teen years. The charts on this page and the next put teen substance use in context by showing how many high school seniors use substances and at what grade they began.

HOW MANY SENIORS USE SUBSTANCES?

How many seniors use substances depends a lot on the substance and on the timeframe.

The chart below shows seniors' use of alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes and e-cigarettes, or vaping. These are the substances most commonly used by seniors. The data are from the latest Monitoring the Future survey (2019), completed annually by approximately 50,000 secondary school students since 1975.

Percent of Seniors Using Substances



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The tables highlight several facts about substance use:

- ▶ About 40% of seniors have never used alcohol, and over 50% have never used marijuana, cigarettes, or vaping products.
- ▶ Alcohol is the substance most commonly used by seniors. Just under 60% reported ever using alcohol in their lifetimes.
- ▶ Many more 12th-grade students vape and use marijuana than smoke cigarettes.
- ▶ Past-month use is less common than lifetime use, but about a third of seniors used at least one of these substances in the past month.

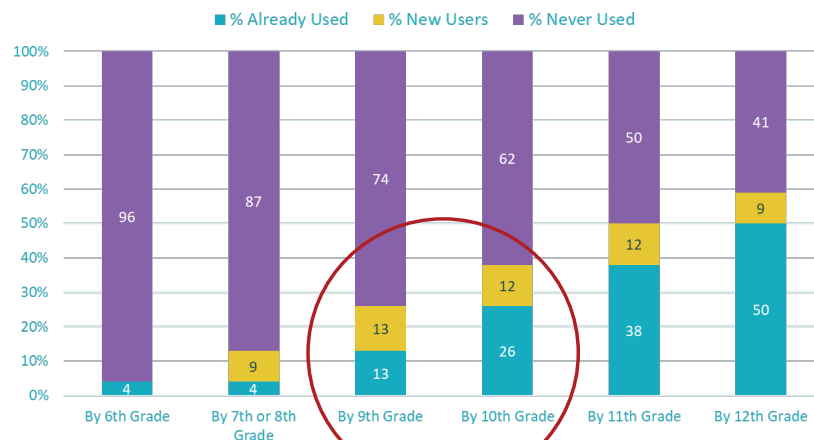
WHEN DO STUDENTS START USING DRUGS?

The chart on the previous page shows how many seniors use substances. The chart below shows at what grade they start using them. Highlights:

- ▶ Very few students--only 4%--have used substances by Grade 6, and just over 10% have used by Grade 8.
- ▶ However, use increases rapidly beginning in Grade 9 and continues through Grade 12 at a rate of 9%-13% more students using each year.
- ▶ There is good news: Even at Grade 12, many students--just over 40%--still have not started using substances.

The trend of increasing use from late middle school through high school means that the time for substance use prevention is now, when your children are on the brink of the teen years.

When Do Students Start Using Substances?



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CAN PARENTS REDUCE THE CHANCES THEIR CHILDREN WILL USE SUBSTANCES?

There's more good news! Parents can take action to reduce the chances their children will start using substances, and GGC shows them how. The Social Development Strategy discussed in Session 1 can help build protective factors and is one key part of the strategy for helping preteens develop healthy behaviors.

Preventing problems like substance use before they begin also requires reducing risk factors, which were introduced in Session 1. Preteens and teens face risks for substance use and other problems in the community, at school, with peers, and even in families. Turn to "Risk Factors for Teen Behavioral Health Problems" under More Resources for Parents, to read about common risks for problems in the teen years. In Sessions 2 through 5, GGC provides parents with knowledge, tools, and skills to reduce eight specific risk factors and increase teens' chances of avoiding early substance use and other behavior problems that are on the rise in adolescence.