There are an estimated 15 million Americans who are alcoholics; 3.5 million of those are teenagers. Despite a legal drinking age of 21 in all 50 states, nine out of 10 teenagers will experiment with alcohol by the time they graduate from high school.

Many people think alcohol is a stimulant, relaxing them and giving them a great high. In fact, alcohol is a depressant. It slows brain function, information processing, and judgment, temporarily lowering inhibitions and relieving anxieties. This can lead the drinker to attempt dangerous behavior of which they ordinarily would be wary.

Alcohol use also impairs reaction time, reflexes, coordination, and vision. People under the influence of alcohol, even small amounts, should never drive. The drunk driver can be the social drinker as well as the chronic alcohol abuser. Those who drink and drive run the increased risk of being in a traffic crash. Nearly 60 percent of all fatal traffic crashes involve alcohol.

Chronic use of alcohol leads to dependence. Sudden cessation of alcohol intake is likely to produce withdrawal symptoms including severe anxiety, tremors, hallucinations, and convulsions and can be life-threatening. Chronic alcohol use can cause permanent brain damage; increase the chances of developing cancer of the esophagus and hypertension, which lead to heart disease; and can permanently damage the liver and pancreas.

Cigarette smoke contains some 4,000 chemicals, several of which are known carcinogens. Perhaps the most dangerous substance in tobacco is nicotine. Nicotine is the substance that reinforces and strengthens the desire to smoke. Because nicotine is highly addictive, smokers find it very difficult to stop smoking.

Because of the negative publicity aimed at smoking, many people, especially teenagers, have turned to smokeless tobacco (snuff and chewing tobacco). It has been proven, however, that smokeless tobacco can be even more addictive than cigarettes. Smokeless tobacco users may suffer receding gums, loosened teeth, elevated blood pressure, and stomach problems. They have 50 times the normal risk of developing oral cancer.
Another "gateway drug" used by many young people and adults is marijuana. Smoking marijuana leaves the user with a feeling of euphoria, altered time of sense, and sometimes hallucinations. The response can be different from person to person, but generally users become more talkative, anxious, and less coordinated. The effects of marijuana can last for up to six hours. Pot smokers lack motivation, have difficulty in forming concepts and paying attention, and can even become paranoid. Because marijuana affects concentration and slows time perception, users become more dangerous when they get behind the wheel of a vehicle.

Large doses may produce convulsions and coma, as well as heart speech difficulties, paranoid and violent behavior, and hallucinations. Drug blocks pain receptors, violent PCP episodes may result in self-injuries, and in the brain that controls the intellect and keeps instincts in check. Blue, Red, Pink, White, Yellow, Orange, Green, Brown, Blue, Black, Silver, Gold, and Infused with tech.

Illegal Drugs

Phencyclidine (PCP) disrupts the functions in the section of the brain that controls the intellect and keeps instincts in check. Users report a sense of distance and estrangement. Time and body movement are slowed down, and the senses are dulled. Because the drug blocks pain receptors, violent PCP episodes may result in self-injuries. Chronic use can lead to addiction, tolerance develops, a user must "swallow" more and more of the products inhaled. Inhalants can lead to instant death through suffocation or heart failure.

Immediate negative effects of inhalants include nausea, vomiting, coughing, nosebleeds, fatigue, lack of coordination, and loss of appetite. Repeated sniffing of concentrated vapors over time can permanently damage the nervous system.

Phencyclidine and Mescaline

The effects of depressants are in many ways similar to the effects of alcohol. Many depressants can produce calmness and related muscles, but larger doses can cause slurred speech, staggering, and altered perception. Very large doses can cause respiratory depression, coma, and death. The combination of depressants and alcohol can multiply the effect of the drugs, increasing the risks. Never drive while under the influence of depressants or any drug.

Depressants are usually prescribed by a physician to relieve anxiety, irritability, stress, and tension, and for the symptomatic treatment of insomnia. Tolerance, however, for depressants develops quickly, requiring higher doses. Once addicted, abrupt cessation or severe reduction of high dose depressant intake can cause anxiety, insomnia, tremors, delirium, convulsions, and death, and should be regulated by a physician.

A large number of the hallucinogens are used in religious ceremonies.

Anabolic Steroids

Anabolic steroids are a group of powerful compounds closely related to the male sex hormone testosterone. Their medical use is limited to treatment of certain kinds of anemia, severe burns, and some types of breast cancer.

Most people, however, associate the use of anabolic steroids with athletes seeking to increase their body weight and muscle strength. While the use of anabolic steroids in conjunction with a program of muscle-building exercise and diet will accelerate physical development, these seemingly positive effects do not last once athletes cease taking the drug, and can cause physical and psychological damage.

Users, therefore, often begin experimenting with other drugs to achieve the same highs previously attained by smaller amounts of marijuana.

Marijuana smoke contains more cancer-causing agents than tobacco smoke. Users often inhale the unfiltered smoke deeply and then hold it in their lungs as long as possible before blowing it out. The inhalation and retention of the smoke cause cancer, heart disease, and impaired pulmonary function. Most people, however, associate the use of anabolic steroids with athletes seeking to increase their body weight and muscle strength. While the use of anabolic steroids in conjunction with a program of muscle-building exercise and diet will accelerate physical development, these seemingly positive effects do not last once athletes cease taking the drug, and can cause physical and psychological damage.

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Injecting cocaine with contaminated needles can cause AIDS, hepatitis, and other diseases. Prevention of reuse, which involves the use of sterile syringes, can result in death or injury from fire or explosion.

Crack is a more dangerous form of cocaine with the same effect, but much more intense. Not only is crack more potent, it is much cheaper than regular cocaine making it even more accessible to young people.

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