



Did You Know?

October 2019

Healthy Habits For A Healthy Start: With the beginning of the school year now in full swing, it's the perfect time to reevaluate any unhealthy lifestyle choices. This time of introspection is especially important for our community's youth and adolescents. They are at a critical stage in development where lifelong health habits can begin to form. Maintaining these positive habits can support overall physical and mental health, as well as be an aid toward the efforts of prevention. Allowing teens to take responsibility for their individual health creates a strong foundation needed to reinforce positive choices in all aspects of life. For adolescents, the school year is the perfect time to demonstrate and develop these important health skills.

What You Should Know:

- According to the 2019 Monitoring the Future study, 13.8% of twelfth graders reported that they had participated in binge drinking. Although this number continues a downward trend, it is still a concern for any youth to participate in this risky behavior, especially when factoring in brain development. The human brain doesn't reach full development until somewhere near age 25. The introduction of any substance prior to full development could lead to negative long-term effects.
- The study also found that high school use of marijuana concentrates/vapes spiked over recent years, while other forms of marijuana use remained steady. Marijuana users, especially adolescents, can develop Amotivational Syndrome. Amotivational Syndrome weakens a user's ambition and can impede upon their goals. Typical outcomes include instances of lowered grades and a lack of commitment to further education.
- The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) reported that, "In 2014, 20.2 million adults in the U.S. had a substance use disorder and 7.9 million had both a substance use disorder and another mental illness... Having two illnesses at the same time is known as "comorbidity" and it can make treating each disorder more difficult."
- Another Study from NIMH found that physical exercise and a healthy diet can improve mental health by reducing anxiety, depression and negative moods. The study also found that practicing healthy habits can improve self-esteem and cognitive function.

What You Can Do:

- **Find Your Fuel:** Practice and enforce healthy habits whenever possible. As children age, they gain more independence and ownership over their choices. Setting a positive example and encouraging a healthy lifestyle (even at an early age) can help youth build a lifelong positive relationship with their body. It can also have valuable impacts on their mental and social emotional health.
- **Remove the Risks:** As stated above, substance use prior to age 25 is detrimental for adolescent brain development. Be sure to eliminate youth access to substances and set household rules that promote safety. Have regular discussions with your child regarding best health practices and the dangers of substance use. If you are in need of any assistance, contact your child's school counselor for guidance on the appropriate "next moves." Bridging the gap between home and school creates a wonderful partnership for youth substance use prevention. Don't forget to connect with local community prevention agencies, like ECCPASA if you, your child, or someone you know is in need of further support.



Information obtained from: www.drugabuse.gov; www.hhs.gov; www.nimh.nih.gov