



Know! The Link Between ADHD and Substance Abuse

Childhood Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) places both boys and girls at an increased risk for teenage substance abuse (according to a large-scale study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences).

The study revealed that compared to their non-ADHD peers, children with the disorder are more likely to:

- Use one or more substances during their teen years;
- Smoke cigarettes on a daily basis;
- Experience marijuana abuse or dependence as an older teen;
- Meet criteria for having a substance abuse or dependence disorder.

* Note: Teen alcohol use remains high for those with or without childhood ADHD.

Experts believe that many of the personality traits and other characteristics commonly found in children with ADHD also contribute to the onset of substance use such as thrill-seeking behaviors, impulsivity, academic struggles, trouble maintaining healthy friendships and sleep issues.

More than likely, you have one or more students in your classroom with ADHD. For those students, it is especially important for them to receive consistent anti-alcohol and drug abuse prevention messages both at home and in school.

If you suspect a student has the disorder, it is necessary to bring it to the attention of his/her parent(s) or other caregiver(s). Too many young people with ADHD go undiagnosed and untreated and end up struggling in different aspects throughout their lives. This can lead to depression and anxiety, as well self-medicating with alcohol or other drugs; furthering the cycle of substance abuse.

The key is to be aware of the link between the two, to step-up your prevention messaging to those students with ADHD, and to encourage parents to seek professional help if you feel a student may have the disorder.

For additional information on ADHD including symptoms, treatment, recommendations and resources, [click here](#).

Sources: [Science Daily: Featured Research - Large study shows substance abuse rates higher in teenagers with ADHD, February 2013](#). [WebMD ADHD and Substance Abuse](#).

Talking regularly with kids about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using.

Know! urges you to encourage other parents to join Know!.

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