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CHEMICAL HEALTH TREND CORNER:

Vaping the New Epidemic that has Many Health Risks

A report from the Surgeon General says there has been a 900 percent increase in e-cigarette use among high school students.

[Click here to watch the report](#)

How to Spot Dangerous Teen Behavior During Summer Vacation

Newport Academy, July 28, 2017



Dangerous teen behavior can be caught early if we know what to look for. There are some clear warning signs and simple things you can do to stay engaged, open communication, and protect teens from pitfalls.

Everyone loves summer—especially teens. However, summer can be a dangerous time for teenagers. That's because they have less supervision and more time on their hands. In addition, there are more opportunities to engage in risky behavior.

In addition, parents often use school as a way to gauge how their children are doing. Therefore, during the summer, parents can sometimes miss the warning signs that indicate a teen's mental health is suffering. Hence, dangerous teen behavior is common.

The Downside of Less Structured Days for Teens

"School is an easy way to measure success, since it is done in such an objective way: grades, attendance, and interpersonal relations with staff," says Ryan Fedoroff, MEd, National Director of Education for Newport Academy. "Over the summer, it can be much more difficult to see when our teens are struggling. Thus we aren't able to intervene at an earlier stage of the decline."

Summer can mask the symptoms of teen depression or teen anxiety. This is because it takes everyone out of their usual routines. Teens have less supervision and structure. Moreover, families typically don't eat meals together as often, resulting in less parent/child communication.

When there are fewer expectations and guidelines for a teen, it is harder to assess

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whether things are going awry or not, Ryan says.



Warning Signs in Teens to Watch for This Summer

Here are some signs to watch for during the summer months that indicate a teen might be struggling.

They isolate themselves.

Self-isolating behaviors might include any of the following:

- Sleeping very late in the morning
- Staying plugged in for hours at a time—watching television, playing video games, scrolling social media
- Not spending time with peers
- Showing lack of motivation or enthusiasm for activities they used to enjoy
- Neglecting self-care, such as showers, exercise, etc.

Their behavior changes.

These behavior changes might include one or more of the following:

- Being defensive when asked questions
- Resisting typical requests
- Acting agitated or defiant
- Seeming sullen
- Exhibiting extreme moods.



They're spending all their time with new friends.

Obsession with a new peer group can be a warning sign, particularly if a teen rejects their former group of friends. While it's not uncommon for teenagers' peer relationships to shift over time, it's important for parents to get to know these new friends. Furthermore, are they supporting your teen, or exerting unhealthy peer pressure?



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They alter their appearance.

With more time on their hands, teens can search for approval or try to fit in with a new peer group by altering their appearance. For example, they might cut or dye their hair, get new body piercings, or change their usual way of dressing. This doesn't have to be a bad thing, but parents should keep a close eye on such behavior. While adolescence is a period of change, extreme change within a short amount of time can be a warning sign that a teen's mental health is suffering.

Read "[The Impact of Fashion on Teen Body Image and Mental Health.](#)"

Summer = More Risky Teen Behavior

Summer is a time when teens are more likely to engage in [risky behavior](#), such as unsafe driving, unsafe sexual activity, and drug or alcohol abuse.

Peer pressure can be a factor in risky behavior, as well as more unstructured, unsupervised time. Moreover, taking risks can be a misguided way for teens to strike out on their own and feel independent. Consequently, dangerous teen behavior can stem from a desire to fit in or be liked.

Teen Substance Abuse Increases in Summer

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, June and July are the

[peak months for teen drinking and drug use.](#)

Consequently, it's important to watch for signs that a teen might be using drugs or alcohol.

The Signs of Teen Substance Abuse

The signs of teen substance abuse include the following red flags:

- Bloodshot eyes, eyes drifting and non-focused
- Runny nose, redness around the nose with no medical cause
- Sudden, unexplained weight loss, looking gaunt and skeletal
- Chronic coughing, a smoker's cough with no medical cause
- Poor hygiene and diminished personal appearance
- Smell of smoke on breath or clothes, unexpected use of perfume or cologne
- Laughing for no reason, emotional instability, extreme moodiness
- Secretive behavior, territorial, hiding in their room
- Extended and unexplained use of bathrooms



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- Compulsive eating, frequent hunger or “munchies”
- Loss of interest in once-favored activities, isolation
- Stealing, unexplained need for money, kleptomania
- Inappropriate clothing, such as long sleeves in summer to hide needle marks
- Avoiding eye contact, inability to communicate, withdrawing into their shell

[Read more about things to watch for and what you can do to help your teen.](#)

Despite Decline in Prescriptions, Opioid Deaths Skyrocketing Due to Heroin and Synthetic Drugs



A new analysis finds that opioid prescriptions declined sharply in 2010, and annual death rates from prescription-opioid overdoses dropped from 13.4 percent before 2010 to 4.8 percent after. However, deaths from synthetic opioids such as heroin and fentanyl increased sharply as drug cartels filled the void. The pre-2010 decline in prescription opioids was precipitated by authorities shutting down pill mills, states adopting prescription drug monitoring programs, and Purdue Pharma reformulating OxyContin into a form that was hard to crush and therefore abuse.

But after 2010, the death rate from heroin surged from 4.1 percent to 31.2 percent and from fentanyl from 13.7 percent to 36.5 percent. The CDC says 42,000 people died from opioid-related overdoses in 2016. The increase from 2013 to 2016 was staggering; the number of deaths involving synthetic opioids grew 84.2 percent each year.

The root cause of this problem is addiction, say the analysts from the American Action Forum. When prescription drugs become less available, those who were addicted to them turned to other sources like the illicit synthetic opioids.

[Read the full story here](#)

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Easing Access to Marijuana Is Not A Way to Solve the Opioid Epidemic



Pediatricians from Boston Children's Hospital take issue with researchers who assert we should legalize marijuana to quell the nation's opioid epidemic. They warn that public-health interventions that are broadly disseminated must have minimal harms.

They say there is ample evidence that marijuana users, especially adolescents, have much higher rates of mood, anxiety, and psychotic disorders; loss of motivation; lower functioning at school or at work, and cognitive deficits.

They point out that e-cigarettes, once thought to be a way to help adult smokers quit, have introduced a new epidemic among high school students

despite its being illegal for them to purchase the devices and that "electronic cigarettes have backfired as a public health strategy."

"We need to make sure that our solutions to the opioid crisis don't create new and even greater problems," they conclude.

[Read the full story here](#)

Vaping Now an Epidemic Among US High Schoolers



Some 1.7 million high school students used e-cigarettes in the past month. So did half a million middle schoolers. As we see in the story above, what started out as a way to help adult smokers quit has become an epidemic among children that leads them to become cigarette smokers.

Worse, companies appear to be targeting kids with flavored e-



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liquids like tutti frutti, cotton candy, and sour gummy worms. These flavors contain chemicals that can be dangerous. One recent study measured metal levels in the aerosol, which is what e-liquids turn into when heated. It found chromium, nickel, zinc, and lead. The leads in e-liquids occur in very small amounts, but when heated they are 25 times higher. No amount of lead is safe to consume.

Teachers report that some students use e-cigarettes in class. The most popular e-cigarette device, called a Juul, looks like a flash drive and fits right in with computer supplies kids bring to school in their backpacks.

Any number of videos on YouTube show teenagers how to swap weed cartridges for nicotine cartridges in their Juuls.

Drug Made from Cannabis Plant Gets Backing from FDA Staff

Many states have legalized cannabidiol (CBD) oil after being lobbied by parents of desperately ill children who suffer severe forms of epilepsy. These families have

moved legislators' hearts as state after state has passed laws allowing the possession of CBD oil to treat epilepsy and, gradually, a host of other conditions.

Unfortunately, there are many problems with the CBD oils that states allow to be sold to people suffering from these conditions:

Not one version of CBD oil sold in dispensaries, pot shops, and even on Amazon has been tested in animals or humans for safety and effectiveness.

- None has been approved by FDA.
- Doses are inconsistent or unknown.
- Contaminants have been found in many versions.
- The amount of CBD contained in the oils is at best about 20 percent. Other ingredients are not identified.
- There are no warning labels on the bottles about potential side-effects or interactions with other drugs the patient may be taking.



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- CBD is a component of marijuana and is illegal to possess or distribute under federal law.
- Doctors cannot prescribe CBD oils that states have legalized, only recommend them or certify that a patient has a condition that the state says CBD oils can treat.
- Insurers do not include state-legalized CBD oils in their formularies.

All of that may be about to change. For nearly two decades, GW Pharmaceuticals of Great Britain has been developing components of marijuana into pharmaceutical-grade medicines and submitting them for approval to European agencies that are the equivalent of the US FDA. GW grows marijuana without pesticides, extracts CBD from it, purifies it, and has developed it into a pharmaceutical-grade drug to treat seizures in rare forms of epilepsy. The drug is 99 percent CBD. The company has been testing it in preclinical (animal) and clinical (human) trials in the US under FDA protocols. Recently, it submitted its data to FDA and

asked for approval to market its drug in the US. FDA says it will announce its decision in June 2018.

The next-to-last-step in the long process of pharmaceutical-grade drug development is for an FDA committee to discuss the data GW has submitted about its CBD oral solution. FDA staff have written a report for the committee which will meet tomorrow, April 19.

If FDA approves the drug, it will be placed in a lower schedule of the federal Controlled Substances Act. It will be legal for doctors to prescribe it. Insurers will likely cover it. Patients will be able to buy it at pharmacies. The problems of state-legalized CBD oils listed above will not apply to an FDA-approved drug. Most important of all, parents whose children suffer rare forms of epilepsy will have a new drug they can count on to relieve their children's seizures.

[Get more information here](#)