

CHEMICAL HEALTH TREND CORNER:

Vaping is Now Associated with Local Cases of Pulmonary Disease

Aug. 2019 Kris Ehresmann

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is working with local public health and health care providers to investigate reports of severe lung illness potentially related to vaping and e-cigarette use among teens and adults. As of August 26, Minnesota had 8 confirmed/probable cases and 9 cases under investigation. With more than 200 reports coming from at least 25 states in recent weeks, MDH is partnering with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to determine a cause and what steps may be taken to prevent additional illness. Many of the patients report having vaped THC (a component of cannabis) purchased illegally on the black market.

In Minnesota, symptoms have resulted in hospitalizations lasting from days to weeks, with some patients admitted to intensive care units. Symptoms included shortness of breath, fever, cough, vomiting and diarrhea. Some patients also reported headache, dizziness, and chest pain.

Many of those involved in this outbreak have reported vaping THC (the principal component of cannabis that produces a high). There does not appear to be a

common product. Most report purchasing THC on the black market.

THC Dab Pens

Dab Pens are becoming more popular with our teenagers. A dab pen is something which is used purely for the consumption of dabs. Dabs are tiny little concentrates of THC, instead of your more traditional dry herb or e-liquid. A dab pen is made up of the same components as a vape pen, and works more or less in the same way.

Unfortunately, authorities say they are finding more THC oil in vape pen devices too. The THC oil found in Juuls and dab pens is more dangerous and is harder to detect. The concentration is similar to smoking 10 to 20 weed cigarettes because the oil is so concentrated. If caught with a Dab Pen, the potency of the THC levels can result in Felony charges.

The Dab pen doesn't give off the traditional smell of marijuana but does give off a very light yet fresh scent. Most people won't realize it's marijuana but they will smell something. Teenagers try to avoid any smell from Dabb wax pen by simply packing very small amounts and vaping by a window or fan. While marijuana is rarely considered physically addictive, it can create a psychological or behavioral addiction to the calm of "euphoria" it generates. The higher concentrations of THC in dabs make those feelings even

more intense, creating a greater potential for addiction.

The Dangers of Mixing Adderall and Alcohol-Abuse on College Campuses

May 22, 2019 Reviewed by Scot Thomas, M.D.

[Adderall \(amphetamine and dextroamphetamine\)](#) is a central nervous system stimulant medication that is primarily designed to be used in the treatment of the mental health disorder ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). It also has other medicinal uses, such as treating individuals with severe forms of the sleep disorder narcolepsy. Adderall can be administered in an immediate-release version (Adderall IR) or an extended-release version (Adderall XR). The extended-release version is particularly useful for children in school because a teacher does not have to administer the medication in the middle of the day. The effects from the immediate-release version will last 4-6 hours, whereas the effectiveness of the extended-release version is estimated to last around 12 hours.

Adderall and Alcohol Abuse

Because Adderall contains highly potent stimulants that can be effective for their medicinal purposes at prescribed doses but can be dangerous when abused at large doses, the [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) (DEA) categorizes Adderall as a Schedule II controlled substance. Medicines in this category are in the highest schedule that can still be prescribed by a physician. Drugs classified in the higher classification, Schedule I, are only available with special permissions from the government and typically just used in

research. Thus, while Adderall does have useful medicinal functions, it also has an extremely high potential for abuse and for the development of physical dependence. Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant that is known to be a significant drug of abuse. Drinking alcohol has a totally different effect than using a stimulant. Stimulant medications generally increase the availability of excitatory neurotransmitters in areas of the brain that, when activated, improve focus, physical activity, alertness, etc. Adderall generally increases the availability of norepinephrine and dopamine. Alcohol acts to inhibit the function of the excitatory neurotransmitter N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) while at the same time enhancing functioning of the inhibitory neurotransmitters gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) and glycine. Alcohol in its various forms is the most frequently abused substance in the United States, according to the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA).

Dangers of Mixing Alcohol and Adderall

Basic written instructions for nearly every prescription medication warn against taking the medication in conjunction with alcohol. In addition, most physicians strongly advise against using any prescription medication in conjunction with alcohol. [The Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) has issued numerous warnings regarding the dangers of mixing drugs, and textbooks like [Concepts of Chemical Dependency](#) and [Chemical Dependency Treatment: Innovative Group Approaches](#) discuss some of the reasons that it is not advisable to mix any prescription medication with alcohol.

- Mixing alcohol with most types of medications reduces the effectiveness of the medication. Mixing alcohol with

stimulants leads to the perception that the effects of both the alcohol and stimulants are not as salient as they would be if one used either the stimulant or alcohol alone.

- Despite the perception that the stimulant or alcohol is not working as effectively as one believes, the actual content of the drug has not been altered. This makes it far easier to overdose on either stimulants or alcohol when both drugs are used in combination.
- When one mixes drugs with different effects, there are a number of potential unpredictable effects that can occur that often would not occur if one consumed either alcohol or Adderall alone. These can include potentially dangerous side effects, such as seizures.
- The potential for idiosyncratic effects (effects of the drugs based on individual differences in physiology and psychological makeup) is markedly enhanced.
- Continued use of large amounts of Adderall and alcohol in combination can lead to an extremely complicated situation where an individual has developed polysubstance abuse or co-occurring substance use disorders.
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Why Individuals Mix Adderall with Alcohol



Abuse of Adderall can occur across all age groups, but the group that most often abuses this drug are males between the ages of 15 and 30. [Research has indicated that Adderall](#) abuse is extremely more common on college campuses than among individuals who are not in college. [Research](#) also indicates that the majority of individuals who have a prescription for Adderall and use it for medicinal reasons (e.g., to treat ADHD) are not the major abusers of the drug. Instead, individuals who abuse the drug often procure it:

- From a friend or relative who has a prescription for it
- As a result of stealing it from someone who has a prescription for the drug
- As a result of buying it illegally (without a prescription)
- Under [the mistaken impression that the misuse/abuse of a prescription drug does not represent a potentially dangerous situation](#)

Even though most individuals with a prescription for the drug do not abuse it, the increase in prescriptions of stimulants for ADHD leads to an increased availability of these drugs for potential abusers.

Research also indicates that a significant number of individuals who abuse prescription stimulant medications will abuse them in conjunction with alcohol at least occasionally. The reasons for abusing the substances together are varied.

- Based on research findings, it appears that the reason individuals abuse both drugs together is to blunt the undesirable side effects of the stimulant drug (e.g., Adderall) by drinking alcohol.
- Adderall abuse in college students is associated with the onset of college examinations. Individuals abuse



Adderall is an attempt to improve their concentration or to study for lengthy periods of time. Because using large amounts of Adderall can lead to hyperactivity, jitteriness, etc., individuals may drink alcohol to counteract these effects.

- In studies, a number of individuals reported drinking alcohol with Adderall in an attempt to allow them to “party” longer. The stimulant will counteract some of the depressant effects of alcohol.
- Some people are under the mistaken impression that because [Adderall is a prescription medication](#), using it in conjunction with alcohol is not as potentially dangerous as using an illicit drug with alcohol.

Read more [here](#)

Teens and Cough Medicine Abuse

By, WebMD Treatment Advisor

Over-the-counter (OTC) [cough](#) and [cold](#) medicines are safe and effective when they're used as directed. But taking too much of them -- on purpose or by accident -- can make you feel high. That can lead some people to abuse them.

Before the FDA outlawed [codeine](#) in [cough medicines](#) in the 1970s, OTC cough medicines created a cheap and effective high. A substance called [dextromethorphan](#) (DXM) replaced codeine in cough medicines. At very high doses, it can mimic the effects of [illegal drugs](#) like PCP and [ketamine](#).

[Teens](#) are more likely to abuse cough medicines because they can get them easily

and without a prescription. What's more, kids can learn where to buy the drug and how to use it to get high online.

How Much Is Too Much?

A safe dose of products with DXM is usually 15 to 30 milligrams over the course of 24 hours. It usually takes more than 10 times that amount to make you high.

There are usually several stages of DXM intoxication, depending on how much you take. Effects can range from a mild “buzz,” to an “out-of-body” feeling, to [hallucinations](#), [paranoia](#), and aggression. They can last anywhere from 30 minutes to 6 hours after you take the drug. If you take that much and then get very active, your body can overheat and you might get a dangerously [high fever](#). This is especially a problem for teens who go to dance clubs, where they can be sold DXM that looks like illegal club drugs such as PCP. When you take DXM with other drugs, or [alcohol](#), it raises the odds of trouble.

DMX can cause other health problems, such as:

- [High blood pressure](#)
- Potential [liver](#) damage
- Central nervous system and [heart](#) problems

Know the Warning Signs

Your teen might be abusing [cough](#) medicines if:

- You find empty boxes or blister packs of cold medicine at home or school.
- Cough or cold medicines go missing from your household.
- You overhear your teen using terms such as “skittles,” “robo-tripping,” “triple-C,” or “dexing” -- all slang for DXM abuse.

- Their friends become unfamiliar to you, their grades fall, or they lose interest in favorite activities.
- They get unexpected online purchases at home.

As with most things regarding your children, you're the first line of defense. Studies show teens are half as likely to misuse [drugs](#) if their parents talk to them about the risks. Because DXM products are sold legally without a prescription, many teens mistakenly believe those medicines have few dangers.

What Parents Can Do

DXM abuse by teens is down by nearly half during the last decade or so. Still, about 1 in 30 teens say they use DXM to get high, and 1 in 4 know someone who does.

What to Do if You're Worried About Suicide

A parent's guide to helping a child in distress

Nadine Kaslow, PhD

What do you do when you're worried that a child might be feeling suicidal? First and foremost, it's important that you talk to him about your concerns in a calm, non-accusatory manner. Sometimes when parents are very worried, they end up saying, "Don't think this way," or "You shouldn't feel that way," and they come across not as loving and caring, as intended, but as critical. Children respond negatively to that. So you really need to be as calm and non-accusatory as you can when talking to them.

Show the love

It may seem obvious to you that you love your children, and that they know you love them. But when they're having a hard time, kids need to hear over and over again from you how much you love them, and how much you care about them. It's not good enough to just say, "You know I love you." You need to convey that in small and big ways. These days, we all have so many things we're juggling that kids can end up unsure of where they fit in, and whether you really have time for them. Let them know how important they are to you.

Express empathy

It's also important to validate a child's feelings. You want to make statements that express empathy for her distress: "It sounds like that was really difficult." "I know how painful that can be." "I know what that's like. I've felt that way." Telling them not to feel that way, to "pull it together," isn't as helpful as saying, "What is it that you're concerned about, and how can I help you?" If you're really concerned about your child it's important that you encourage him to [get professional help](#), and that you convey that getting help isn't weak, but something you would respect him for doing, and that you would work together to accomplish.

Prioritize the positive

Another important way to prevent suicidal behavior is to prioritize interacting with your child in positive ways. Some times we get into a sort of vicious cycle with a child. The child does something concerning; the parent gets critical; the kid does something



more concerning; the parents get more upset. All interactions turn contentious. Interacting in positive ways means doing fun things together, hanging out and chatting about things that aren't controversial, that aren't difficult.

Related: [Teen Suicides: What Are the Risk Factors?](#)

Minimize conflict

So choose your battles wisely with your kid. It's part of normal development for adolescents to rebel, and you need to pick what you're going to set limits about, and the rest of the time you want to focus on the positive connections. It also helps to try to increase your child's involvement in positive experiences. Kids who are involved in a lot of engaging or fun activities tend to fare better. Your goal as a parent is to reassure struggling kids that they won't feel like this forever, and you can help do this by promoting positive experiences. When kids feel suicidal it's often because they feel hopeless and can't imagine things being better.

Stay in touch

It's also really important to monitor your child's whereabouts when they aren't with you, whether online or out of the house. You can't stop your kids from [texting and Facebooking and using Twitter](#). That's normal social interaction at this point. So you need to get on Facebook yourself, learn how to tweet, learn how to text. And use those channels to stay on top of what your kids are doing.

Know your child's friends

In the "real" world, it's also critical to know your child's friends—to have a good sense of who they are and to have a connection with them. Sometimes it's harder the older your kids get, but it's really important you do that. You should know the parents of their friends and be in touch with them, too. And you want to communicate regularly with your child's school to ensure her safety and care in the school setting. Don't hesitate to use the school and the people in the school as partners in your child's care when you have concerns.

Talk openly

But again, the crucial first step: If you think your child might be suicidal, talk with him about it, ask him about suicidal thoughts. Sometimes people are afraid that if they talk about it it will make suicidal thoughts more real, and suicide more likely to happen. But the truth is that if a child feels that he has someone safe in the family that he can talk to, he feels better. He feels more understood. He feels like there's more empathy for him. And that gives you an opening to explain the value of psychotherapy, and possibly medication for the feelings that are causing him so much pain.

Find a clinician who's a good match

To get a referral to a mental health professional, you can consult your child's doctor or a psychologist at his school. I recommend that you look for a mental health professional who has experience with suicidal teenagers. Not everybody is comfortable with, or has experience with kids who are suicidal. And when you're



interviewing people, it's important to pick somebody you—and your child—feel comfortable with. So if your son says, "[I just can't connect with him; I don't feel comfortable with him.](#)" you want to take that seriously. Of course, if he does that with the second person and then the third person, at some point you may need to say, "Well, of these three people, who did you feel best with?"

Participate in therapy

And once you've found a clinician, participate actively in therapy with your child. You need to be a partner in your child's therapy. The more the child feels like you really care, the better. And that's not just one parent. When somebody in the family is suicidal it's a family affair, and everybody needs to help out and be engaged.

There are several kinds of therapy that have been shown in research trials to be particularly useful for suicidal kids. One is cognitive behavioral therapy, and that helps change kids' thoughts, which in turn changes their feelings and their actions. And [dialectical behavior therapy](#) is another approach. It's a more mindfulness-based approach, and we know that that's helpful for particular types of suicidal kids, particularly those who have what's called borderline personality disorder, and lots of suicidal thoughts. And, finally, some kids, particularly those who are seriously [depressed](#) or [anxious](#) or have [ADHD](#), may benefit from [medication](#) in combination with psychotherapy.

Take emergency measures

Of course, if you're worried that if you don't do something right now your child will attempt suicide, you need to call 911, or whatever the emergency mental health access number is in your community, or take your child to the hospital. Suicidal thoughts or behaviors are an emergency, and must be considered as such.

Tips for Communicating With Your Teen

Keeping the parent-child relationship strong during a tricky age

Rachel Ehmke

The [teenage](#) years have a lot in common with the terrible twos. During both stages our kids are doing exciting new things, but they're also pushing boundaries (and buttons) and throwing [tantrums](#). The major developmental task facing both age groups is also the same: kids must pull away from parents and begin to assert their own independence. No wonder they sometimes act as if they think they're the center of the universe.

This makes for complicated parenting, especially because teens are beginning to make decisions about things that have real consequence, like school and friends and driving, not to speak of [substance use](#) and [sex](#). But they aren't good at [regulating their emotions](#) yet, so teens are prone to taking risks and making impulsive decisions.

This means that having a healthy and trusting parent-child relationship during the teenage years is more important than ever. Staying



close isn't easy, though. Teens often aren't very gracious when they are rejecting what they perceive to be parental interference. While they're an open book to their friends, who they talk to constantly via text messages and social media, they might become [mute when asked by mom how their day went](#). A request that seemed reasonable to dad may be received as a grievous outrage.

If this sounds familiar, [take a deep breath](#) and remind yourself that your child is going through his terrible teens. It is a phase that will pass, and your job as parent is still vitally important, only the role may have changed slightly. Here are some tips for navigating the new terrain:

1. Listen. If you are curious about what's going on in your teen's life, asking direct questions might not be as effective as simply sitting back and listening. Kids are more likely to be open with their parents if they don't feel pressured to share information. Remember even an offhand comment about something that happened during the day is her way of reaching out, and you're likely to hear more if you stay open and interested — but not prying.

2. Validate their feelings. It is often our tendency to try to solve problems for our kids, or [downplay their disappointments](#). But saying something like "She wasn't right for you anyway" after a romantic disappointment can feel dismissive. Instead, show kids that you understand and empathize by reflecting the comment back: "Wow, that does sound difficult."

3. Show trust. Teens want to be taken seriously, especially by their parents. Look for ways to show that you trust your teen. Asking him for a favor shows that you rely on him. Volunteering

a privilege shows that you think he can handle it. Letting your kid know you have faith in him will [boost his confidence](#) and make him more likely to rise to the occasion.

4. Don't be a dictator. You still get to set the rules, but be ready to explain them. While pushing the boundaries is natural for teenagers, hearing your thoughtful explanation about why parties on school nights aren't allowed will make the rule seem more reasonable.

5. Give praise. Parents tend to [praise](#) children more when they are younger, but adolescents need the self-esteem boost just as much. Teenagers might act like they're too cool to care about what their parents think, but the truth is they still want your approval. Also looking for opportunities to be positive and encouraging is good for the relationship, especially when it is feeling strained.

6. Control your emotions. It's easy for your temper to flare when your teen is being rude, but [don't respond in kind](#). Remember that you're the adult and he is less able to control his emotions or think logically when he's upset. Count to ten or take some deep breaths before responding. If you're both too upset to talk, hit pause until you've had a chance to calm down.

Read more [here](#)