

# MARIJUANA

The strength of marijuana has increased dramatically in the past few decades, and there are new products such as oil, shatter, wax, dabs, and budder. Marijuana can be smoked, vaped, dabbed, or eaten.

## HOW TO TURN DOWN THE HEAT:

- **Know the signs of marijuana use:** sleepy, lethargic, bloodshot eyes, and increased appetite for snacks.
- **Disapprove of youth marijuana use.** You are your child's number one influence: your teen will be less likely to use marijuana if you disapprove of youth use.

## WHAT TO SAY:

- Marijuana distorts how the mind perceives the world. It alters senses and perception of time, changes mood, slows reaction time, reduces coordination and balance, makes thinking and problem solving difficult, and disrupts learning and memory. It can cause hallucinations, delusions, paranoia, and psychosis.
- Marijuana can affect decision making, concentration and memory for days after use, and even permanently.
- Youth marijuana use has been linked with depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Teen use increases the risk for developing psychosis.
- Marijuana can be addictive. In addition, youth use can change how the brain responds to other drugs, increasing the risk of addiction later in life.
- Other risks of marijuana use include reduced school performance, reduced life satisfaction, and impaired driving. Combining marijuana with drinking even a small amount of alcohol greatly increases driving danger.



# VAPING

Youth vaping has skyrocketed: 15% of Sauk County High School Students were current users in 2021. Vaping products are battery-operated devices that deliver nicotine and flavorings and come in many shapes and sizes.

## HOW TO TURN DOWN THE HEAT:

- **Monitor your teen's online activity** for purchases and social media shares.
- **Get the facts:** vapes contain ingredients that are addictive and harmful, including nicotine, heavy metals, and chemicals that can cause cancer and permanent lung damage. Visit [www.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://www.SurgeonGeneral.gov) for details.
- **Support the minimum legal age of 21 for tobacco products.** If your teen knows you disapprove, they will be less likely to use nicotine.
- **Set a positive example** by being tobacco-free. For free help, visit [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov) or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW. Help for teens to quit is available too.

## WHAT TO SAY:

- Nicotine is the third most addictive drug, after heroin and cocaine.
- Nicotine can train your developing brain to be more easily addicted to other drugs. Other long-term effects include problems with memory, concentration, impulse control, and mood.
- Vaping products are not currently regulated. This means that no government agency tests the devices for safety or accuracy of ingredients, including level of nicotine.
- JUUL always contains nicotine: each pod has the nicotine equivalent of an entire pack of cigarettes!
- Vaping products are fairly new, so there is not much research on health effects. Don't be a lab rat! There have been thousands of cases of vaping-related illnesses among youth, causing hospitalization and even death.
- Vaping products come in flavors that appeal to youth + social media marketing = teens who vape are 4 times more likely to become cigarette smokers. Don't fall for big tobacco's marketing to youth!
- Vapes contain the same cancer-causing ingredients as cigarettes. In addition, they contain heavy metals and chemicals that can cause permanent lung damage.
- There are free resources for teens to quit vaping: This is Quitting (text QUIT to 202-804-9884), SmokeFree TXT for Teens, QuitStart Mobile App, or the WI Tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW).

# PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE

Commonly misused prescriptions include those that treat: pain (opioids), anxiety or insomnia (depressants), and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (stimulants). Misusing a prescription drug means taking medication other than as prescribed, taking someone else's prescription, or sharing yours with others. Misuse can lead to addiction, overdose, and death.

## HOW TO TURN DOWN THE HEAT:

- **Lock up your medications.** Contact us for a FREE lock box!
- **Dispose of them safely.** Don't hold on to unused medications. Find a free, no questions asked, dropbox near you at: [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/opioids/permanent-drug-drop-boxes.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/opioids/permanent-drug-drop-boxes.htm)  
Prefer at-home disposal?  
Contact us for a FREE deactivation kit.
- **Keep your prescriptions private.** You and your child should not tell people about the medications your family members use.
- **Know how much you have:** Count your medications on a regular basis to make sure none are missing.
- **If your child needs a prescription painkiller,** ask the doctor for a small amount to start. Start low and go slow. Administer the medication directly to your child and watch for side effects. There may be peer pressure for your child to share medication with friends, so don't allow your teen to access the prescription directly.
- **Know the signs of opioid overdose** and how to respond. Contact us for training and free Narcan, a medication that reverses an overdose (a \$125 value).

## WHAT TO SAY:

- Prescriptions are strong medicines that can help with medical problems when used as directed. But all medications have side effects, and some can be dangerous, like addiction, trouble breathing, and seizures. You must get prescriptions from a doctor who knows your health history and current medications.
- Prescription drugs are especially dangerous when combined with alcohol or other drugs.
- Misusing a prescription medication can be just as dangerous as taking illegal drugs. Dangers include side effects, addiction, overdose, and death. About half of drug overdose deaths in the US are caused by prescription medication.
- It's illegal to share your prescription medication or take anyone else's.

# Tips for Talking to Youth About Drugs



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**PARTNERSHIP  
FOR PREVENTION**  
Empowering Sauk County to prevent substance misuse.



## There's a lot cooking in the adolescent brain. Harmful substances like alcohol and other drugs turn up the heat.

Our brains develop until about age 25. Studies show that the earlier youth use alcohol or other drugs, the more likely they are to have problems with addiction as adults, and the more damage they can do to key parts of their brain – including memory, learning, mood and mental health.

*By creating environments that “turn down the heat” in their adolescent brains, we can prevent problems with substance use from boiling over or even starting to simmer.*



## TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUTH ABOUT DRUGS

You are the most important and powerful influence in your child's life. Talk early and often about drugs.

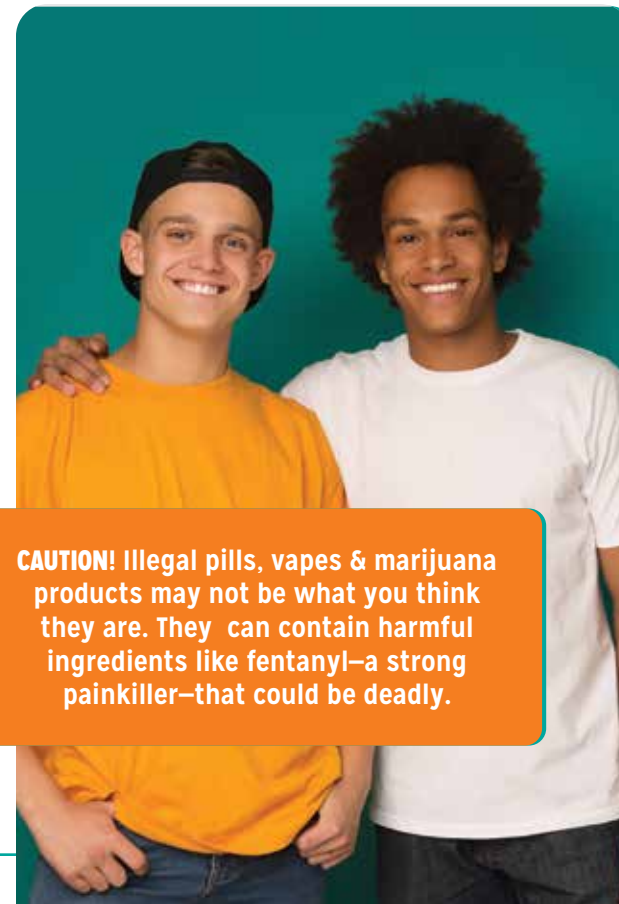
- **Have multiple conversations** about specific drugs throughout childhood and the teen years.
- **Take advantage of natural conversation starters.** Rather than the dreaded “we need to talk,” you might ask your teen what they think about a situation you witness together, such as seeing someone vaping or listening to an ad for beer.
- **Make it a conversation, not a lecture.** Ask your child questions, such as: What do you think is the most dangerous drug? Why? What do you know about alcohol? Why do you think teens vape?
- **Be patient, listen without judgement, and don't interrupt.** Your teen will be more receptive and will appreciate your open, objective attitude.
- **Disapprove of any youth drug use.** Teens who think their parents disapprove are less likely to use drugs.
- **Talk about brain development.** Research shows that youth drug use can cause permanent changes in the developing brain. Youth who use drugs create pathways in the brain that can prime them for addiction and other problems later in life. Try: “Adolescent brain development is like building a house. You need a solid foundation and four straight walls, or the house will not be stable and strong. Using alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, or other drugs can interfere with the foundation of your brain development. I don't want that for you!”
- **Focus on your child's goals** – both short and long-term. Try “You want to do well at next week's game. Drug use can affect your coordination, memory, learning, attention, and mental health. Set yourself up to accomplish your dreams.”
- **Get the facts about drugs.** Visit [Teens.DrugAbuse.gov](https://www.Teens.DrugAbuse.gov) for comprehensive info. To learn about paraphernalia and sharpen your detective skills as a parent, visit [www.PowerToTheParent.org/be-aware/hidden-in-plain-sight](https://www.PowerToTheParent.org/be-aware/hidden-in-plain-sight).

*They say:* “Would you rather I drink alcohol? Weed is so much safer.” OR “Would you rather I smoke? Vaping is better for you.”

*You could say:* “Honestly, I don't want you doing anything that can harm you. I'm interested in knowing why you think weed (or vaping) is safer than alcohol (or smoking).”

**WHY THIS WORKS:** This reminds your child that you care about his or her well-being. Expressing genuine curiosity about their thought process will help them open up. Later, follow up with a few facts about the dangers of weed or vaping.

- **Know how to get help.** For behavioral health services, call 211, download the Sauk County Resource Guide or contact Sauk County Human Services at 608-355-4200.



**CAUTION! Illegal pills, vapes & marijuana products may not be what you think they are. They can contain harmful ingredients like fentanyl—a strong painkiller—that could be deadly.**

## ALCOHOL

Alcohol use is a serious problem in Wisconsin. Taking away car keys is not enough to keep teens safe: falls, fights, sexual assaults, poisonings and death are not worth the risk.

### HOW TO TURN DOWN THE HEAT:

- **Ensure the gatherings your child attends and hosts are alcohol free.** In Wisconsin, providing alcohol or a place for your kid's friends to drink is illegal and can result in fines up to \$10,000 and/or jail time. For tips on how to keep parties safe and legal, see our guide or visit [NotInMyHouseWI.org](https://NotInMyHouseWI.org).
- **Support the minimum drinking age of 21.** Research shows that if you disapprove of underage drinking, your teen will be less likely to drink.
- **Monitor your alcohol supply.** If you have a garage beer fridge or liquor cabinet, lock it up. Contact us for a FREE lock!

### WHAT TO SAY?

- Alcohol is a powerful drug that slows down the body and mind. It impairs vision, clear thinking, judgement, coordination, and reaction time, especially for youth, whose “logical brains” are still developing. Research shows that people who drink heavily are slower in thinking and reacting, even when they are sober!
- No level of drinking is safe for those under age 21. Teens who drink are 70% more likely to have problems with addiction later in life.
- Youth alcohol use can also negatively affect information processing, learning, attention, and mental health.
- People are very bad at judging how seriously alcohol has affected them. Never drink and drive or ride with someone who has been drinking. Please call home instead. We'll come get you with no questions asked at that time.