

# The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study



Teens & Parents  
2013



**MetLife  
Foundation**



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**Partnership for Drug-Free Kids  
is dedicated to reducing teen  
substance abuse and supporting  
families impacted by addiction.**

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## The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study Teens & Parents 2013

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Research made possible by a grant from

**MetLife  
Foundation**

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The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids is dedicated to reducing teen substance abuse and supporting families impacted by addiction.

We develop public education campaigns that drive awareness of teen substance abuse, and lead teen-targeted efforts that inspire young people to make positive decisions to stay healthy and avoid drugs and alcohol. On our website, [drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org), and through our toll-free helpline (1-855-DRUGFREE), we provide families with direct support and guidance to help them address teen substance abuse. Finally, we build healthy communities, and advocate for greater access to adolescent treatment and funding for youth prevention programs. As a national nonprofit, we depend on donations from individuals, corporations, foundations and the public sector and are thankful to SAG-AFTRA and the advertising and media industries for their ongoing generosity.

# MetLife Foundation

For more than 20 years, MetLife Foundation has provided support for initiatives focusing on substance abuse prevention and education. Since 1999, the Foundation has collaborated with the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids on a national public awareness campaign to help parents and caregivers communicate with children about the risks of drug use.

MetLife Foundation has sponsored the MetLife Foundation / Partnership Attitude Tracking Study since 2009.

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its long-standing tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Their commitment to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide is reflected in their dedication to empowering older adults, preparing young people and building livable communities. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has provided more than \$530 million in grants to nonprofit organizations addressing issues that have a positive impact in their communities.

For more information about the Foundation, [visit MetLife.org](http://MetLife.org).

## The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study

Sponsored by MetLife Foundation

The 2013 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS), sponsored by MetLife Foundation, consists of two nationally projectable samples: a survey that measures substance abuse attitudes and behaviors of parents with at least one child aged 10 to 19 and a teen sample for students in grades nine through twelve.

The 2013 survey is the 25th wave of research conducted since 1987. Since 1993, the teen study has been conducted in schools, and since 1995 the parents sample has been conducted in homes. Respondent confidentiality was maintained for both studies. Prior to those years, the studies were conducted by interviews in central location malls. These studies are based on self-reported data which represent the dominant methodology used in survey research in this area.

Since 2007, deKadt Marketing and Research, Inc. has conducted the in-home parent survey and since 1993, GfK Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications has conducted the teen study. In 2013, the parents/caregivers sample was 750 and surveying was conducted from September to October 2013. The margin of error for the parent sample is +/- 3.6 percentage points. In 2013, the teen sample was 3,705, and surveying was conducted from February to June 2013. The margin of error for the teens sample is +/- 2.1 percentage points.

Statistically significant differences on tables, charts or graphs in this report are at the 95 percent confidence level and are annotated with either an asterisk or a letter.

A/B/C = Statistically significant at 95 percent confidence level.

### Questionnaire Development

deKadt Marketing and Research, Inc. and GfK Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications developed the questionnaires in cooperation with the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids and MetLife Foundation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Changing Landscape

The 2013 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS) reports on the attitudes and behavior of teens and parents at a significant time in our culture's relationship with drugs and substance abuse.

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**Although the “drug landscape” is changing for parents and teens alike, it's important to note that parents still have considerable influence on their teens' decisions.**

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In November 2012, Colorado passed Colorado Amendment 64 and Washington passed Initiative 502, legalizing the recreational use of marijuana for adults 21 years of age or older.

In August 2013, the Major League Baseball Association suspended baseball star Alex Rodriguez for using performance-enhancing drugs, and in a January 2013 televised interview, Lance Armstrong admitted to doping throughout his athletic career.

Through this report, Partnership for Drug-Free Kids informs healthcare professionals, educators, community leaders, the news media and families about current patterns in adolescent use and misuse of drugs and alcohol, including marijuana, performance-enhancing substances and prescription medicine. In addition, we consider the influence that some of these recent events may have on teen perceptions and behavior relating to substance use.

### Normative Marijuana Use

Over the past several years – at least since 2010, when teens' marijuana use (lifetime) rose to 49 percent – overall prevalence has remained relatively stable at a high level. Moreover, significant levels of daily use, increases in perceived use by friends, and data showing that one third of teens would be more likely to use marijuana if it were legal, suggest that marijuana use is becoming essentially normalized among a large segment of adolescents.

Although the “drug landscape” is changing for parents and teens alike, it's important to note that parents still have considerable influence on their teens' decisions. The new PATS data show that if parents communicate their disapproval of marijuana use, and if they effectively communicate the risks associated with heavy marijuana use, then they increase the chances that their child will avoid becoming a heavy marijuana user, even if he or she decides to experiment with marijuana.

## Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse

After a reported 33 percent increase in teen prescription drug misuse and abuse in 2012, the prevalence has remained stable at 23 percent (lifetime use) for all teens in 2013. Although this dangerous behavior concerns families across the nation, there is encouraging evidence of behavioral and environmental trends that may help reduce teen misuse and abuse of prescription drugs in the future.

The first noteworthy trend is the favorable, albeit directional, movement in misuse and abuse of leading opioids. Although this trend is not statistically significant, the prevalence rate has incrementally decreased over the past three years; currently 15 percent of teens report having used the prescription pain relievers Vicodin or OxyContin without a prescription at some point in their lives. Almost nine in ten teens (85 percent) also recognize the risk in misusing and abusing prescription drugs on a regular basis, and teens are most likely to cite “overdosing” as the single greatest risk in misusing and abusing prescription drugs without a prescription – a real and potentially fatal consequence.

Lastly, there has been a decline over the past five years in the perceived accessibility of prescription opioids and peers’ use of opioids without a prescription. Even though these trends hold for most other substances, the declines for prescription opioids are among the more salient.

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**Teens may be using hGH not only in an effort to improve their athletic performance, but also to improve other aspects of their lives, such as their physical appearance.**

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## Performance-Enhancing Substances

Over the past five years, approximately 5 to 6 percent of teens have consistently said they used either synthetic human growth hormone (hGH) or steroids without a prescription at least once within their lifetime. In 2013, however, 11 percent of teens reported using synthetic hGH at least once within their lifetime – a significant twofold increase – and 7 percent of teens reported the same for steroids.

While it is doubtful that all 11 percent of teens who reported using synthetic hGH actually obtained and used genuine synthetic human growth hormone (which is administered via injection), the proliferation of commercially available and actively marketed products that imply they contain synthetic hGH, or promote the natural production of synthetic hGH within the body, makes it easy to understand why teens believe they have used synthetic hGH.

More than one in five teens (22 percent) say they are aware of online marketing efforts that try to sell steroids, synthetic hGH or other performance-enhancing substances. This visibility in commercial settings

may also be contributing to the fact that teens are now less likely to believe that using synthetic hGH is a risky behavior compared to 2012.

Our data and analysis show, moreover, that teens may be using these drugs not only in an effort to improve their athletic performance, but also to improve other aspects of their lives, such as their physical appearance.

## Other Noteworthy Trends in Teen Substance Abuse

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**Teens are less likely to report having access to abusable substances.**

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The 2013 PATS data show that most other substances measured have remained relatively stable year-over-year, with the exception of alcohol. Past-year and past-month alcohol use has declined to the lowest level of prevalence seen in the past five years. However, this trend isn't accompanied by a decrease in the perceived risk of alcohol consumption.

Moreover, teens are generally less likely to report having friends who use substances, which is significant since teens are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol if their friends also engage in substance abuse.

Teens are also less likely to report having access to abusable substances. Notably, a few substances top this trend: over-the-counter cough medicine, synthetic marijuana and bath salts. This may be attributed in part to ongoing advocacy and legislative efforts that make it more difficult for teens to access these substances.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### Marijuana

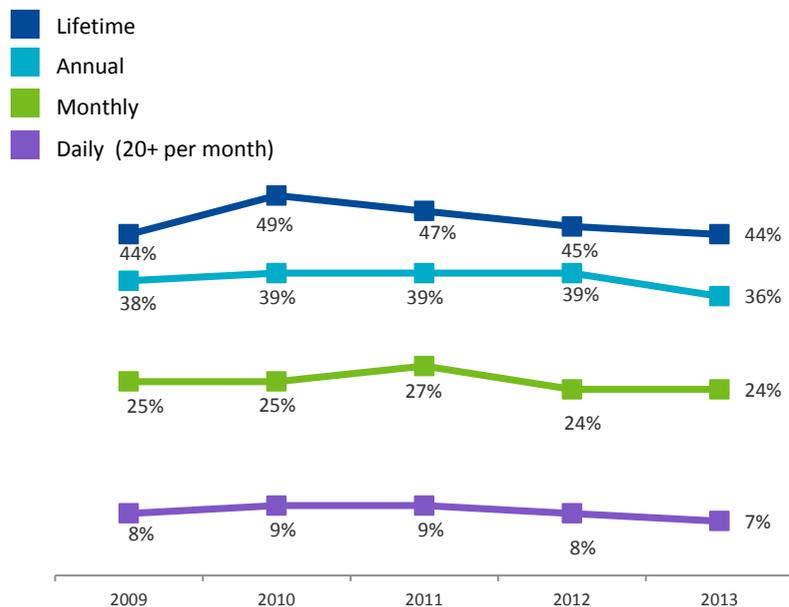
#### Prevalence of Teen Marijuana Use

Almost half of teens (44 percent) report using marijuana at least once within their lifetime; more than one in three (36 percent) report using in the past year; one in four (24 percent) report using within the past month; and 7 percent report using at least 20 times within the past month. These levels have remained basically flat over the past five years.

**Almost half of teens (44 percent) report using marijuana at least once within their lifetime.**

Hispanic and African-American teens are also more likely to report using marijuana than their Caucasian counterparts (with 52 percent of Hispanic teens, 54 percent of African-American teens, and 39 percent of Caucasian teens indicating use).

**Prevalence of Teen Marijuana Use**  
% Used at Least Once (n=3705)



*"(In your lifetime/in the past 12 months/in the past 30 days), how many times have you used marijuana?"*

Teens say they are using marijuana mostly to "have fun" (50 percent), to relax (48 percent) or to feel good (45 percent). And when asked if they intend to use marijuana in the future, more than half of teens (56 percent) say they do not intend to do so, while the remaining say they do intend to use marijuana in the future (22 percent) or are not sure of their intent (23 percent).

**Those who initiate marijuana use at a younger age are more likely to use marijuana - as well as other substances - more frequently than those who begin using at an older age.**

Reasons for Using Marijuana (n=3705)	
To have fun	50%
To help me relax	48%
Because being high feels good	45%
To help me forget my troubles	37%
To experiment	36%
To relieve boredom	33%
To deal with pressures and stress in school	30%
My friends are using	29%
To help deal with problems at home	27%
To feel better about myself	23%
To look cool	17%
It's a habit, I can't stop	16%
I don't know why I use	19%

*"[What was] the one main reason why you last used marijuana?"*

More than four in ten teens (41 percent) who have used marijuana started doing so before the age of 15. This is worrisome considering that those who initiate marijuana use at a younger age are more likely to use marijuana - as well as other substances - more frequently than those who begin using at an older age.

### Marijuana Attitudes and Behaviors

The perceptions of risk in experimenting with marijuana and using marijuana frequently have fluctuated since 2009. Currently, seven in ten teens (70 percent) see great or moderate risk in using marijuana regularly, and four in ten (39 percent) see great or moderate risk in using marijuana once or twice.

Perception of Risk in Using Marijuana (n=3705)					
% Great / Moderate Risk	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
Trying marijuana once or twice	42% D	40%	42% D	37%	39%
Using marijuana regularly	74% BDE	68%	72%	69%	70%

A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

*"Which describes how much overall risk there is in ..."*

To help explain what these risks entail, the surveyed teens were given a list of possible risks associated with marijuana use and were asked to select the greatest risk that would deter them from using marijuana. The majority of teens said "getting into trouble with the law" was the greatest risk that would prevent them from using marijuana - which

does reinforce the view that legalization of marijuana for recreational use would lead to wider use among teens. Teens said upsetting their parents and losing motivation in school were also significant risks that would prevent them from using marijuana.

The data also show that those who do not intend to use marijuana in the future are more likely to associate marijuana use with addiction and health complications, and those who are not sure of their intent are more likely to cite losing motivation in school as a great risk (these findings are depicted in the chart below). Similarly, those who have not used marijuana at all are more likely to associate marijuana use with addiction, health complications, compromising one's future and losing respect from their friends and family.

**The majority of teens said “getting into trouble with the law” was the greatest risk that would prevent them from using marijuana – which does reinforce the view that legalization of marijuana for recreational use would lead to wider use among teens.**

#### Specific Risks of Using Marijuana by Intention to Use in the Future (n=3705)

	Do You Plan on Using Marijuana in the Future?		
	Yes (A)	No (B)	I don't know (C)
Getting into trouble with law	42%	39%	44%
Upsetting your parents	34%	35%	37%
Losing motivation in school	30%	33%	<b>40% A</b>
Losing respect of friends and family	26%	32%	31%
Compromising your future	25%	<b>33% A</b>	29%
Becoming addicted	22%	<b>33% A</b>	27%
Changing your personality	23%	26%	24%
Impairing your judgment	21%	22%	23%
Endangering your health	15%	<b>25% A</b>	20%
Getting depressed	21%	19%	21%
Embarrassing yourself	17%	18%	18%
Overdosing	14%	17%	15%
None of these risks would prevent me	<b>36% BC</b>	13%	<b>21% B</b>

A-C indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

*“What is the greatest risk that would prevent you from using marijuana?”*

*“Do you intend to use marijuana in the future?”*

As with marijuana prevalence rates, teens' beliefs relating to marijuana generally show little fluctuation over the prior years (as indicated by the chart below). Compared to 2012, teens are less likely to indicate that they would use marijuana if it were legal (2013: 34 percent vs. 2012: 38 percent) – even though, as we've seen, getting in trouble with the law remains a deterrent in many teens' minds.

More than one in ten teens (12 percent) continue to indicate their parents would be okay with their marijuana use; three in ten (29 percent) believe that most teens at their school don't smoke marijuana; and four in five teens (79 percent) say their parents discussed marijuana use the last time they discussed the risks of drug use in a conversation with them.

Attitudes on Marijuana Use (n=3705)					
% Agree strongly / somewhat	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
If marijuana were legal I would be more likely to use it	-	-	36%	38% E	34%
In my school, most teens don't smoke marijuana	29%	28%	26%	26%	29%
My parents would be OK if I smoked marijuana once in a while	-	11%	14%	14%	12%
<b>% Yes</b>					
Discussed marijuana with parents	79%	77%	77%	81%	79%

A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

*"The last time one or both of your parents talked to you about drugs, what specific drugs did they talk about?"*

## Marijuana and Alcohol Displacement

There has been much speculation that with marijuana legalization teens will likely switch from consuming alcohol to marijuana. However, our data show that there is a strong correlation between alcohol consumption and marijuana use, meaning, that if a teen uses marijuana, then he or she is more likely to consume alcohol than a teen who does not smoke marijuana.

In addition to alcohol, those teens who use marijuana are generally more likely to use other substances, especially cigarettes, synthetic marijuana and prescription drugs.

**Parents should effectively communicate with their teens about their disapproval of marijuana use, and help explain why regular marijuana use is a behavior that comes with serious consequences.**

## Marijuana Use and Parental Intervention

It is well documented that social disapproval negatively correlates with actual usage, and this is reflected in the new PATS data as well. However, our data also show that the potential legalization of marijuana has a strong influence on the less frequent marijuana user - or in other words, the illegal status of marijuana in most states may be helping to prevent the occasional user from becoming a more frequent user. Similarly, perceived parental permissiveness and perceived risk in using marijuana regularly also has a strong influence on the more frequent marijuana user.

This has important implications for the role parents can play in preventing a child's experimental, or infrequent, marijuana use from progressing to frequent use. In an environment where many teens don't perceive use of marijuana "once or twice" as risky, and fully one-third of parents believe marijuana should be legal, it will be increasingly difficult for parents to prevent experimentation among their kids. But our data show that parents do wield enough influence to help prevent

their teen from becoming a frequent user. To do so, parents should effectively communicate with their teens about their disapproval of marijuana use, and help explain why regular marijuana use is a behavior that comes with serious consequences.

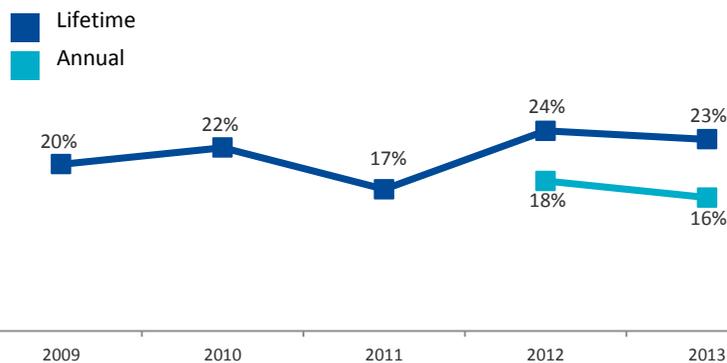
## Medication Misuse and Abuse

### Prevalence of Teen Misuse and Abuse of Prescription Medicine

Misuse and abuse of prescription medicine continues to be the third most prevalent drug abuse behavior measured among teens, following use of marijuana and alcohol. Almost one in four teens (23 percent) reports abusing or misusing a prescription drug at least once in their lifetime, and one in six (16 percent) reports doing so within the past year (as shown below). In addition, Hispanic and African-American teens are more likely to report misusing or abusing prescription drugs compared to their Caucasian counterparts (with 27 percent of Hispanics, 29 percent of African-Americans and 20 percent of Caucasians reporting use).

**Misuse and abuse of prescription medicine continues to be the third most prevalent drug abuse behavior measured among teens, following use of marijuana and alcohol.**

**Prevalence of Teen Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse**  
% Used at Least Once (n=3705)



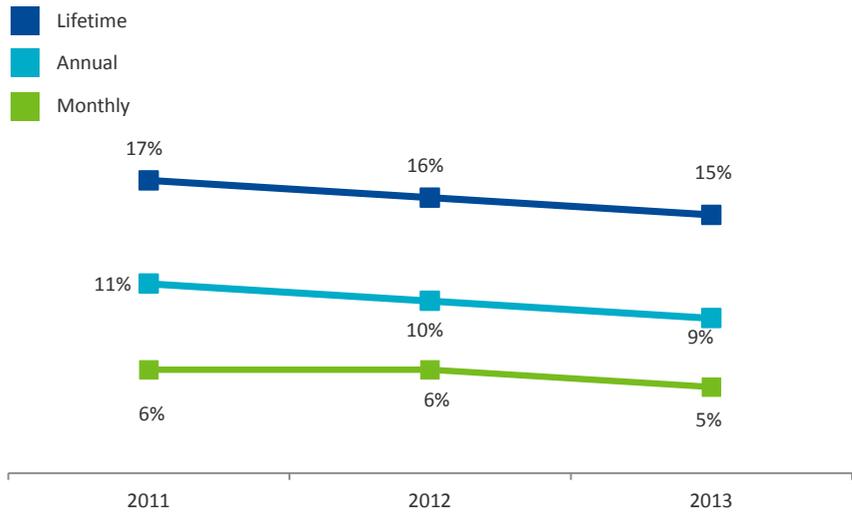
*“(In your lifetime/in the past 12 months), how many times have you tried any prescription drug (when a doctor did not prescribe it for you) in order for you to get high or change your mood?”*

Teen misuse and abuse of Vicodin and OxyContin has directionally declined over the past three years, even though the changes remain statistically insignificant. In 2013, roughly one in seven teens (15 percent) report using Vicodin or OxyContin at least once in their lifetime, and only one in eleven (9 percent) indicates misusing or abusing these prescription opioids in the past year.

**One in eleven teens indicates misusing or abusing prescription opioids in the past year.**

**One in twelve teens report misusing or abusing Ritalin or Adderall in the past year.**

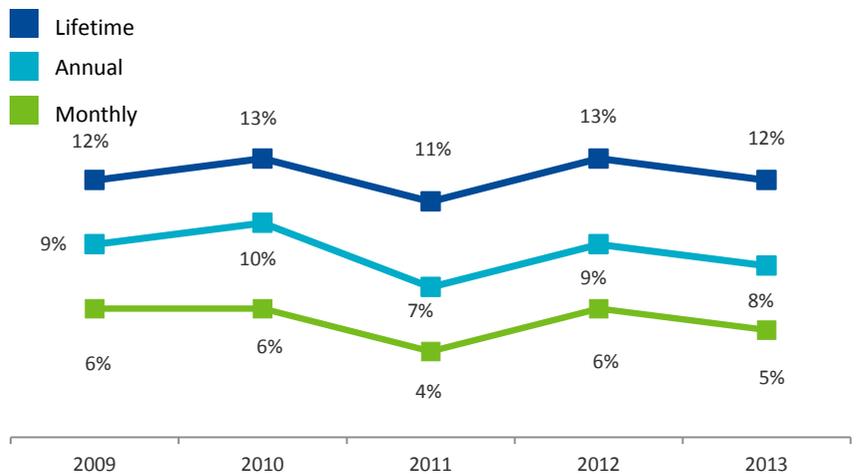
**Prevalence of Teen Vicodin/OxyContin Misuse and Abuse  
% Used at Least Once (n=3705)**



*"(In your lifetime/in the past 12 months/in the past 30 days), how many times have you used the prescription pain relievers VICODIN or OXYCONTIN when a doctor did not prescribe it for you?"*

Teen misuse and abuse of prescription stimulants has also remained relatively stable over the past five years, with one in eight teens (12 percent) reporting misuse or abuse of Ritalin or Adderall at least once in their lifetime, and one in twelve (8 percent) reporting misuse or abuse within the past year.

**Prevalence of Teen Ritalin / Adderall Misuse and Abuse  
% Used at Least Once (n=3705)**



*"(In your lifetime/in the past 12 months/in the past 30 days), how many times have you used the prescription drugs Ritalin or Adderall when a doctor did not prescribe it for you?"*

Teens who reported misusing or abusing a prescription drug were asked for their main reason for last trying a prescription drug without a prescription. Among this subset of teens, the majority said they did so to relax (15 percent), experiment (15 percent), or to “have fun” (14 percent).

**Teens who reported misusing or abusing a prescription drug did so to relax, experiment or “have fun”.**

#### Reasons for Using Rx Drugs Without A Prescription (n=3705)

To help me relax	15%
To experiment	15%
To have fun	14%
Because being high feels good	12%
To help me forget my troubles	12%
To deal with pressures and stress in school	9%
My friends are using	9%
To relieve boredom	8%
To help deal with problems at home	8%
It's a habit, I can't stop	8%
To feel better about myself	7%
To look cool	6%
I don't know why I use	9%

*“[What was] the one main reason why you last used a prescription drug without a prescription?”*

## Perception of Risk for Misuse and Abuse of Prescription Drugs

Two-thirds of teens (67 percent) say there is great or moderate risk in trying prescription drugs once or twice without a prescription, and more than eight in ten teens (85 percent) say the same for using prescription drugs regularly without a prescription. As shown in the chart below, three in four teens (76 percent) say there is risk in trying pain relievers, and another three in four (75 percent) say there is risk in trying the prescription drugs Ritalin or Adderall. These measures have fluctuated moderately over time.

#### Perception of Risk in Using the Following Substances (n=3705)

% Great / Moderate Risk	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
Trying prescription pain relievers without a prescription	78% D	-	77%	74%	76%
Trying Adderall or Ritalin without a prescription	79% BE	74%	79%	77%	75%

A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

*“Which describes how much overall risk there is in ...”*

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**Half of teens (50 percent) say the greatest risk in using prescription drugs without a prescription is overdosing.**

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Although two-thirds of teens (67 percent) see risk in trying prescription drugs without a prescription once or twice, there is a higher level of perceived risk associated with misusing and abusing prescription medicines on a regular basis (85 percent). The only behaviors that teens believe to be riskier are methamphetamine use (89 percent), heroin use (89 percent), and cocaine or crack use (89 percent). In fact, a similar proportion of teens see great or moderate risk in using Ecstasy (85 percent).

Teens were also given a list of risks associated with using prescription drugs without a prescription, and were then asked to select the greatest risk that would prevent them from misusing or abusing prescription drugs. Among these teens, half (50 percent) say the greatest risk in using prescription drugs without a prescription is overdosing. A distant second is endangering your health (30 percent) or becoming addicted (30 percent). Interestingly, becoming addicted, getting depressed and losing motivation in school are perceived to be greater risks among those teens who have misused or abused prescription drugs, compared to those who have not.

#### Specific Risks of Using Prescription Drugs Without a Prescription (n=3705)

Overdosing	50%
Endangering your health	30%
Becoming addicted	30%
Getting depressed	27%
Compromising your future	25%
Losing respect of friends and family	23%
Changing your personality	22%
Upsetting your parents	22%
Getting into trouble with law	21%
Impairing your judgment	19%
Losing motivation in school	19%
Embarrassing yourself	12%
None of these risks would prevent me	10%

*“What is the greatest risk that would prevent you from using prescription drugs without a prescription?”*

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## Teen Attitudes Toward Misuse and Abuse of Prescription Drugs

A notable proportion of teens report problematic attitudes regarding misuse and abuse of prescription drugs. Almost one-third of teens (31 percent) believe prescription drugs can be used as study aids. Another one-third (31 percent) believe it's okay to take prescription drugs (without having a prescription) to deal with an injury or pain, as long as they are not getting "high," and almost three in ten teens (29 percent) believe taking a larger dosage of prescription drugs that were prescribed to them is okay as long as they were not doing so to get "high."

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**In fact, almost four in ten teens (38 percent) who have misused or abused a prescription drug have obtained them from their parents' medicine cabinet.**

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Other concerning trends involve parents' beliefs and behaviors and the teens' perceptions of those beliefs and behaviors. More than one in five teens (22 percent) say parents would not care as much if their teen were caught abusing or misusing prescription drugs, when compared to illicit drugs. More than half of parents (55 percent) say anyone can access their medicine cabinet, and almost three-quarters of teens (73 percent) say it is easy to access prescription drugs from their parents' medicine cabinet. In fact, almost four in ten teens (38 percent) who have misused or abused a prescription drug have obtained them from their parents' medicine cabinet.

Some parents even have troubling perceptions regarding teen misuse and abuse of prescription drugs, since more than two in ten parents (21 percent) believe ADHD medications can improve a child's academic performance, even if the child does not have ADHD. One in six parents (16 percent) believes using prescription drugs to get high is much safer than using illicit drugs; one in eight parents (13 percent) believe it's okay if their teen were to take a prescription drug without a prescription; and one in ten (9 percent) believe it's okay to do so if their teen were reducing pain.

## Environment and Teens' Ease of Access to Prescription Drugs

Teens believe prescription opioids and stimulants are easier to obtain than any other illicit substance, with the exception of marijuana. Only one-third of teens (33 percent) believe it's hard to obtain prescription opioids, and another one-third (32 percent) believe it's hard to obtain prescription stimulants. Importantly, though, teens are 32 percent more likely to believe prescription opioids are hard to obtain than they were five years ago, and 19 percent are more likely to believe the same for prescription stimulants.

**“Sharing” of prescription stimulants can be a path to misuse and abuse, more so than for other types of prescription drugs.**

**Prescription Drugs Accessibility (n=3705)**

% Very / Fairly Difficult to Get	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
Rx Pain Relievers without a Prescription	25%	26%	30% A	29%	33% ABD
Rx Stimulants without a Prescription	27%	29%	33% AD	29%	32% AD

*“How difficult or easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following:”*  
A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

Another favorable trend has emerged regarding misuse and abuse of prescription opioids, as only 32 percent of teens say they have friends who engage in this risky behavior – a 26 percent decrease from 43 percent in 2009. Friends using prescription stimulants went from 34 percent in 2009 to 29 percent in 2013 (a less dramatic, 15 percent decrease).

**Prescription Drugs Peer Misuse and Abuse (n=3705)**

% Have Friends Who Misuse or Abuse	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
Rx Pain Relievers without a Prescription	43% DE	41% E	40% E	39% E	32%
Ritalin or Adderall without a Prescription	34% E	33%	31%	32%	29%

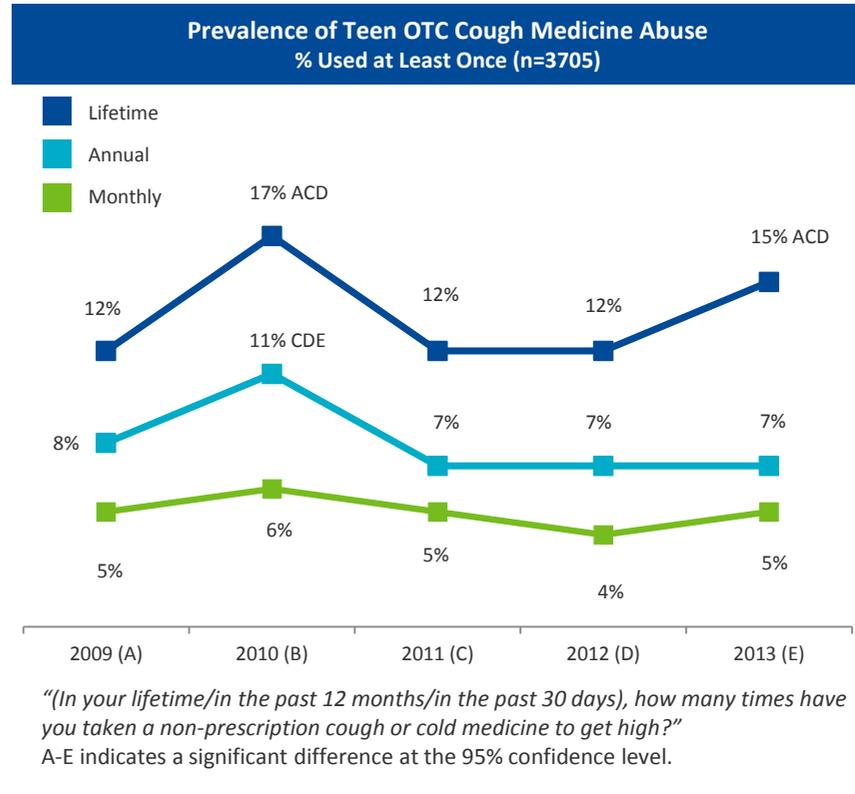
*“How many of your close friends, if any, do each of the following as far as you know?”*  
A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

It should be noted that there is a strong relationship between the misuse and abuse of prescription opioids, having close friends who misuse and abuse prescription opioids, and the perception of accessibility for these drugs. Interestingly, the relationship between having friends who use and using yourself is stronger for stimulants than for opioids or for prescription drugs in general. These data reinforce the anecdotal evidence that the “sharing” of prescription stimulants can be a path to misuse and abuse, more so than for other types of prescription drugs.

## Prevalence of Over-the-Counter Cough Medicine Abuse Among Teens

The lifetime prevalence of teen abuse of over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicine has slightly increased from 12 percent of teens in 2012 to 15 percent of teens in 2013. Past-year use and past-month use of over-the-counter cough medicine has remained relatively stable since the prior year, with 7 percent and 5 percent indicating use, respectively.

Teens have reported that it is increasingly difficult to obtain over-the-counter cough medicine, more so than any other substance measured.



Three in four teens (75 percent) perceive great or moderate risk in abusing over-the-counter cough medicine, and among the teens who report doing so, almost four in ten (38 percent) say they were 12 or 13 years old when they first abused OTC cough syrup.

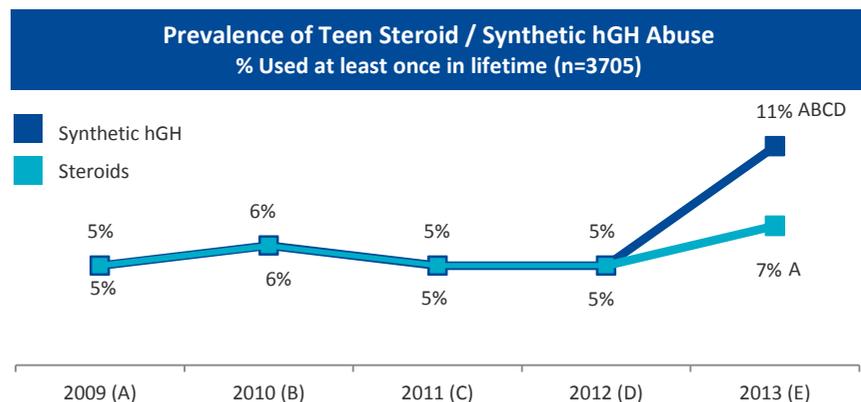
Over the past few years, teens have reported that it is increasingly difficult to obtain over-the-counter cough medicine, more so than any other substance measured. Specifically, in 2010, only 13 percent of teens found it difficult to obtain OTC cough medicine, and this proportion increased markedly and consistently to 28 percent in 2013. This may be due in part to age restrictions that have been put in place by most chain drugstores, requiring proof that the buyer of over-the-counter cough medicine be 18 years of age or older.

## Performance-Enhancing Substances (Synthetic hGH and Steroids)

### Teen Use of Performance-Enhancing Substances (PES)

More than one in ten teens (11 percent) report using synthetic human growth hormone (hGH) at least once in their lifetime – a more than two-fold increase since 2012. Prior to 2013, the prevalence rate for synthetic hGH use among teens remained consistent at five percent for four years (as indicated by the graph below). Teen use of steroids, on the other hand, increased marginally from 5 percent to 7 percent over the past five years – this trend is slight, but still statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

**More than one in ten teens (11 percent) report using synthetic human growth hormone (hGH) at least once in their lifetime – a more than two-fold increase since 2012.**



*“In your lifetime, how many times, if any, have you done each of the following.... used (steroids/human growth hormone) for athletic performance or physical appearance when a doctor did not prescribe them for you?”*

A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

Teens who report using synthetic hGH only once account for this increase, indicating that the rise in use is possibly due to experimentation; the proportion of adolescents who have used synthetic hGH more than once in their lifetime has remained stable year-over-year.

African-American and Hispanic teens are more likely to report use of synthetic hGH, with 15 percent of African-American teens, 13 percent of Hispanic teens, and 9 percent of Caucasian teens saying they used synthetic hGH at least once within their lifetime. Both boys and girls report use of synthetic human growth hormone and steroids without a prescription. The PATS study found no significant difference between the proportions of teen boys (12 percent) vs. teen girls (9 percent), who report using synthetic hGH.

In addition, our data show a strong correlation between the use of synthetic hGH and steroids. Furthermore, those teens who have used marijuana, smokeless tobacco or synthetic marijuana contributed more to the recent increase in synthetic hGH use compared to those teens who have used other types of substances.

## Teen Attitudes and Behaviors Related to PES Usage

Teens are less likely to believe there is great or moderate risk in using performance-enhancing drugs compared to prior years, and those who do not perceive synthetic hGH or steroid use as a risky behavior are more likely to use these performance-enhancing substances. The perception of risk teens associate with synthetic hGH use has significantly decreased from 86 percent in 2012 to 81 percent in 2013. The decrease for steroid risk is not as steep, but still statistically significant when looked at over the past five years. In 2009, 85 percent of teens said there was great or moderate risk in using steroids, and 82 percent of teens currently share the same belief.

**Only eight percent of teens agree that using performance-enhancing substances in athletics is okay “if it’s the only way to win”, and this percentage has continuously declined over the past five years.**

Perception of Risk in Using the Following Substances (n=3705)

% Great / Moderate	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
hGH that a doctor did not prescribe to you	NA	NA	NA	86% E	81%
Steroids that a doctor did not prescribe to you	85% E	84%	84%	83%	82%

A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

*“Which describes how much overall risk there is in ...”*

Although these recent trends are concerning, there are some favorable movements in other attitudes regarding performance-enhancing drugs. Specifically, teens are less likely to agree with the statement “knowing that some successful athletes use performance-enhancing substances makes me more likely to use or consider using them” compared to two years ago (17 percent in 2013 vs. 23 percent in 2011), even though they are more likely to believe that professional athletes use drugs (67 percent in 2013 vs. 61 percent in 2011). Even more telling, only 8 percent of teens agree that using performance-enhancing substances in athletics is okay “if it’s the only way to win”, and this percentage has continuously declined over the past five years. Lastly, almost nine in ten teens (88 percent) continue to agree that steroids can cause severe health problems.

**The increase in reported synthetic hGH use may be for reasons including, but not limited to, athletics, such as improving physical appearance.**

Attitudes Related to PES Use (n=3705)					
% Agree Strongly / Somewhat	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
Teens that use steroids for athletic performance or physical appearance can be at risk for severe health problems	89%	89%	91%	89%	88%
Many professional athletes use drugs sometimes	58%	60%	61%	61%	67% ABCD
Knowing that some successful athletes use PES makes me more likely to use or consider using them	28% CDE	23% E	23% E	19%	17%
It's ok for a teen to use performance enhancing drugs in athletics if it's the only way to win	17% CDE	14% E	13% E	12% E	8%

A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

However, it should be noted that these attitudinal metrics are related to athletic performance, and from our data, there is no statistically significant difference in the athletic involvement between synthetic hGH users and non-users. This suggests that the increase in reported synthetic hGH use may be for reasons including, but not limited to, athletics, such as improving physical appearance.

### Awareness of Online Marketing for PES Among Teens

More than one in five teens (22 percent) are aware of online marketing efforts that promote use of steroids, synthetic hGH or other performance-enhancing drugs, and this measurement has fluctuated over time (as depicted in the chart below). Those who use synthetic hGH are also more likely to be aware of these online marketing efforts.

Awareness of Online Marketing of PES (n=3705)					
% Yes	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
Awareness of Online Marketing	19%	21%	16%	17%	22% CD

*“Are you aware of efforts to sell you steroids, human growth hormone (hGH) or other performance enhancing substances via the Internet?”*

A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

## PES Environment and Parental Involvement

Amid these unfavorable trends in increased use of performance-enhancing substances among teens, there are noteworthy trends in the perceived accessibility of steroids and peer use – similar to the trends seen with other substances. Currently, one in five teens (21 percent) reports that at least one friend uses steroids, and another one in five teens (21 percent) believes it is easy to obtain steroids; both of these measures improved in 2010 and have since remained consistent.

**There are noteworthy trends in the perceived accessibility of steroids and peer use – similar to the trends seen with other substances.**

### Steroid Accessibility & Peer Use (n=3705)

	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
% Have Friends Who Use Steroids	25% BE	18%	22%	22%	21%
% Very / Fairly Easy to Get Steroids	26% BCDE	20%	20%	19%	21%

*“How many of your close friends, if any, do each of the following as far as you know?”*  
*“How difficult or easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following:”*  
 A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

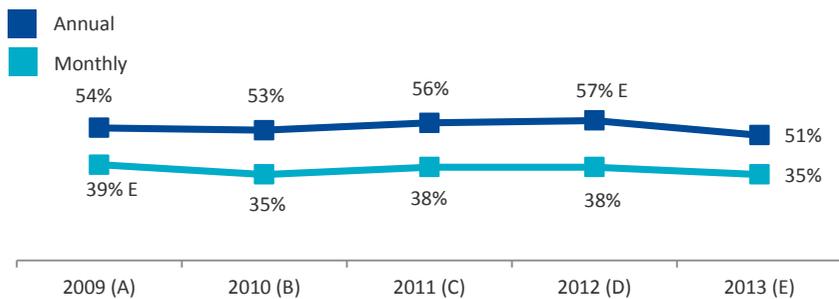
More than half of parents (58 percent) report having discussed the use of steroids or other performance-enhancing substances with their teens, and only 3 percent of parents believe their teen has ever used steroids or other performance-enhancing substances. The new PATS data highlights a disconnect between parents and teens as only 12 percent of teens indicate that the last conversation they had with their parents about the risks of drug use included talking about synthetic hGH, and this measure has remained stable over the past five years.

## Alcohol

### Teen Alcohol Consumption

The latest PATS data show that fewer teens report drinking alcohol in the past year or past month. Past-year alcohol use has declined significantly versus last year, from 57 percent in 2012 to 51 percent in 2013, and past-month alcohol use has declined gradually but significantly from 39 percent in 2009 to 35 percent in 2013.

**Prevalence of Teen Alcohol Consumption**  
% Used at Least Once (n=3705)



*"In the past (12 months/30 days), how many times have you used alcohol?"*

**More than one-third of teens (32 percent) believe their parents would say it's okay for them to drink beer every once in a while, while only 4 percent of parents corroborate this statement.**

The perception of risk associated with alcohol use, however, has remained relatively stable over the past four years. Six in ten teens (60 percent) perceive risk in having one or two drinks nearly every day, and roughly eight in ten teens perceive risk in having four or five drinks nearly every day (81 percent) or drinking five or more drinks in a row on one occasion (79 percent). More than one-third of teens (32 percent) believe their parents would say it's okay for them to drink beer every once in a while, while only 4 percent of parents corroborate this statement.

## Other Trends in Teen Substance Abuse

### Teen Substance Abuse: Other Trends Revealed

As seen in the chart below, most of the remaining prevalence rates for teen substance abuse have remained stable since 2009. One in six teens (16 percent) continues to report using inhalants at least once in their lifetime; one in eight (13 percent) reports using Ecstasy; one in ten (11 percent) reports using cocaine/ crack; and one in twelve (8 percent) reports using methamphetamine.

**Prevalence of Teen Substance Abuse (n=3705)**

Lifetime Use – % Used at least once	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
Synthetic Marijuana	-	-	-	17%	17%
Inhalants	17%	17%	15%	15%	16%
Ecstasy	13%	13%	13%	12%	13%
Cocaine / Crack	11%	11%	11%	9%	11%
Salvia	-	-	-	8%	10%
Methamphetamine	7%	7%	7%	6%	8%
Bath Salts	-	-	-	5%	7%
Heroin	5%	4%	4%	4%	6%

*"In your lifetime, how many times have you used the following substances...?"*  
A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

## Accessibility of Substances

More teens believe that it is difficult to obtain substances of abuse (except for alcohol) compared to previous years. This change in attitude is led by a 115 percent increase over a 3-year period in the perceived difficulty of accessing over-the-counter cough medicine; an 85 percent increase over a one-year period for bath salts; and a 48 percent increase over a one-year period for synthetic marijuana.

It is difficult to know the extent to which these shifts reflect an actual decline in availability, a reduction in the number of teens actively looking for specific substances of abuse, or a perceived decline in peer usage. In the case of over-the-counter cough medicine, as indicated above, a concerted effort to age-restrict the availability of OTC cough medicine at retail may well have played a role.

**More teens believe that it is difficult to obtain substances of abuse (except for alcohol) compared to previous years.**

Accessibility of Substances (n=3705)					
% Difficult to Get	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
Heroin	-	-	-	42%	49% D
Meth	42%	42%	45%	44%	48% AB
Cocaine / Crack	35%	37%	42% A	41% A	46% ABD
Steroids	37%	42%	41%	40%	43% A
Ecstasy	35%	34%	39%	36%	40% AB
Bath Salts	-	-	-	20%	37% D
Synthetic Marijuana	-	-	-	23%	34% D
Rx Pain Relievers	25%	26%	30% A	29%	33% ABD
Rx Stimulants	27%	29%	33% AD	29%	32% AD
OTC Cough Medicine	-	13%	22% B	22%B	28% BCD
Marijuana	15%	14%	18% D	13%	17% D
Alcohol	-	11%	11%	10%	12%

*"How difficult or easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following:"*  
A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

## Peer Substance Abuse

As seen from the following chart, there has been a decline in the number of teens who report having friends who abuse substances, except for marijuana and alcohol. In fact, the number of teens who believe their peers use marijuana has increased to 78 percent in 2013 after relatively unchanged measures since 2009.

**Teens who report that their parents show concern for them and are monitoring their behaviors are less likely to engage in substance abuse.**

Peer Use (n=3705)					
% Have Friends Who Use	2009 (A)	2010 (B)	2011 (C)	2012 (D)	2013 (E)
Marijuana	72%	71%	73%	73%	78% ABCD
Alcohol once a week	-	73%	79% B	76%	75%
Prescription Pain Relievers	43% DE	41% E	40% E	39% E	32%
Ecstasy	34% E	33%	32%	30%	29%
Prescription Stimulants	34% E	33%	31%	32%	29%
Synthetic Marijuana	-	-	-	33% E	26%
OTC Cough Medicine	33% DE	31% E	32% E	28% E	24%
Cocaine / Crack	31% DE	27%	28%	25%	24%
Inhalants	28% E	29% E	28% E	26%	23%
Steroids	25% BE	18%	22%	22%	21%
Meth	21% DE	18%	19%	17%	16%
Heroin	18% DE	15%	17% E	14%	13%

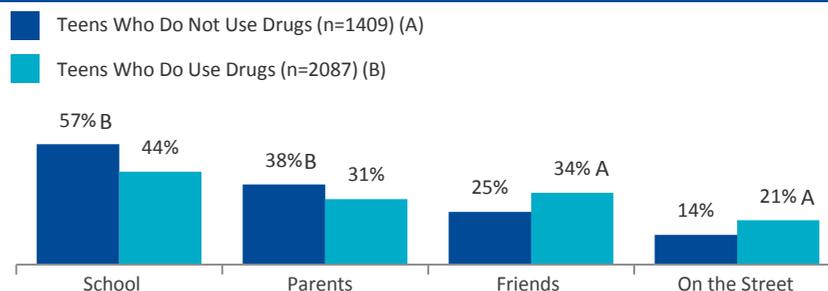
*"How many of your close friends, if any, do each of the following as far as you know?"*  
A-E indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

### Parental Involvement and Attitudes

In the past, we have seen that parental monitoring is related to adolescent drug abuse, and our data continue to support this, as teens who report that their parents show concern for them and are monitoring their behaviors are less likely to engage in substance abuse. Our data also show that teens are less likely to use substances if they have learned a lot about the risks of drug use from their parents or from schools.

Unfortunately, one-third of parents (34 percent) believe there is little they can do to prevent their kids from trying drugs other than alcohol; and one in four parents (23 percent) feel uncomfortable telling their child not to use drugs because of their own history of drug use. Likewise, among parents who suspect their child has used drugs or alcohol, one in five (21 percent) have not intervene. But the role of parents is critical. In fact, if a teen learns about the risks from his or her friends or "on the street" rather than from parents, then that teen is more likely to engage in substance use (as indicated by the graph below).

**Learned About Risk of Drugs From Following Sources by Teen Drug Use (% A lot) (n=3705)**



A-B indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.  
*"How much have you learned about the risks of drugs from each of the following:"*

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**Parents can play a crucial role in preventing their child from progressing beyond experimental (“once or twice” use) to heavy use of marijuana.**

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## Implications

### Marijuana

The overall prevalence of teen use of marijuana reported in PATS has been basically flat (no significant changes) over the past five years – in spite of vocal support for legalization of marijuana during this period followed by actual legalization in Colorado and Washington in November of 2012. (There have been indications in other data sets of slight directional increases in use over this time frame.)

But there is ample cause for concern as we look more deeply at some of the data relating to teen marijuana use, in particular:

- a) Indications that legalization will lead to wider use by teens (more than one-third of teens say that if marijuana were legal they’d be more likely to use it).
- b) No indication that marijuana use will “displace” alcohol use. On the contrary, marijuana users are much more likely than non-users to consume alcohol as well as cigarettes and other drugs – suggesting that increased marijuana use will supplement rather than displace alcohol use.
- c) The significant number of frequent marijuana smokers (7 percent of teens report they smoke at least 20 times per month), and early age of reported first use (41 percent of teen smokers say they began before the age of 15). This has deeply disturbing implications, both for teens’ academic performance (if you’re high every day, you’re not getting the full benefit of education) and for long term problems: individuals who begin using drugs or drinking in early adolescence are significantly more likely to encounter problems (including addiction) in later life than those who start after age 18.

There is important and encouraging news for parents, though, particularly in those states where marijuana is now legal for recreational use and potentially even more available to teens. Parents can play a crucial role in preventing their child from progressing beyond experimental (“once or twice” use) to heavy use of marijuana. They must make clear – regardless of their own history or their opinions about legalization for adults – that they disapprove of teens using marijuana and that regular use comes with serious consequences.

For more information on marijuana and other substances, please visit [drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org).

### Prescription Drugs

There is some evidence that, among teens at least, recent increases in the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs have leveled off, and in the case of leading opioids, prevalence appears to be decreasing. (These

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**Parents are very much in a position to influence accessibility via the home medicine cabinet. Safeguarding and properly disposing of unused medications are clearly important prevention measures that parents can take.**

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**The largely unregulated marketplace in which PES are aggressively promoted is an area of apparently growing interest and potential danger to teens that cries out for stricter controls on manufacture and marketing.**

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findings for teens are echoed in other national data sets as well.) It's difficult to explain these declines in terms of increased risk perceptions (in fact, perceived risk of misuse and abuse of stimulants is softening slightly); what has changed dramatically is perceived accessibility among teens, particularly for prescription pain relievers (from 25 percent of teens who say pain relievers are "very" or "fairly" difficult to get in 2009 to 33 percent in 2013). And in a possibly related development, we are seeing significant declines in teens' perceptions that peers are misusing or abusing prescription pain relievers (and stimulants).

The implication for parents is that accessibility (or at least the perception of accessibility) may matter a great deal in terms of teens' actual misuse and abuse of prescription medications – and parents are very much in a position to influence accessibility via the home medicine cabinet. Safeguarding and properly disposing of unused medications are clearly important prevention measures that parents can take.

To learn more about medicine abuse, including safeguarding, properly disposing unused medications, and talking to kids about the dangers of misusing and abusing medicine, please visit The Medicine Abuse Project at <http://medicineabuseproject.org>.

## Synthetic Human Growth Hormone

The dramatic year-to-year increase in teens' reported use of synthetic human growth hormone (hGH) – from 5 percent to 11 percent – is cause for concern, even if it's unlikely that all 11 percent of teens who say they used synthetic hGH actually did. Performance-enhancing substances are seen as significantly less accessible than they were five years ago and there appears to be less of a linkage between the highly publicized behavior of professional athletes and teens' decisions to use these substances. But we are seeing weaker risk perceptions among teens related to performance-enhancing substances and increased awareness of online marketing of such products.

A picture emerges of teens – both boys and girls – entering a largely unregulated marketplace (online and in-store) in which performance-enhancing substances of many varieties are aggressively promoted with promises of improved muscle mass, performance and appearance. It's very difficult to know what exactly is in the substances teens are consuming, or what the short and long-term impact on their health may be. The implication for parents, healthcare professionals, policy makers and regulators is that this is an area of apparently growing interest and potential danger to teens that cries out for stricter controls on manufacture and marketing.

For more information regarding synthetic hGH, steroids, and other performance-enhancing substances, please visit <http://playhealthy.drugfree.org/>. The Play Healthy website is sponsored by the Major League Baseball association, and provides resources to educate young athletes, coaches and parents about performance-enhancing substances and their risks.



352 Park Avenue South, 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10010  
212-922-1560

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)