

## CHEMICAL HEALTH TREND CORNER:

### THC Crude Oil Drug cartels caught carrying new form of marijuana across border

JANUARY 8, 2020, BY [KNXV STAFF](#)

For Mexican drug cartels, marijuana remains a big business but they're turning their attention to an even more potent product now crossing our border.

It looks like motor oil but the black watery tar sitting in five-gallon buckets is nearly pure THC concentrate.



"I started to see the people that would usually backpack marijuana through the desert were now backpacking up crude oil," said Detective Matthew Shay with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

The concentrate is made using a complex process of stripping the THC off of plants. What's left is distilled and filtered even further, creating a product that began at about 6% THC into one that carries a THC content of more than 80%.

Shay says it takes about 250 pounds of low-grade commercial marijuana to produce a five-gallon bucket of crude cannabis oil. Once in a concentrated form, profits can skyrocket. Each bucket could produce more than \$500,000 in vaping cartridges.

"These are all black-market cartridges — none of these are from a licensed dispensary. These are all ones we've recovered in the last year," said Shay, pointing at packaging easily purchased on the internet.

Once the crude oil from the cartels hits the streets, local dealers begin cutting the product with additives like vitamin E acetate – a compound linked to the nationwide vaping illness.

ABC15 had a couple questions about the product:

ABC15: "Do you suspect vitamin E acetate will be found in any of this stuff?"

Shay: "Oh yeah, sure. Oh yeah, no doubt."

ABC15: "How much are Americans habits driving how they deliver what drugs to us?"

Shay: "Well that's the whole business right? If there isn't a market, there's no reason to be shipping the stuff up."

Using vape cartridges to deliver THC is now the most popular way of consuming marijuana.

It's that demand that fuels the cartel's new strategy – creating a risk no one should take.

“The black market cannabis cartridges are going to be hazardous, period,” said Shay.

Labs are testing the crude oil to find out exactly what kind of chemicals are in this product.

At this point we don't know for certain that the cartels' concentrate is indeed linked to the nationwide outbreak of lung illness that's sickened thousands across the country.

### **Summer Vacation is High Risk Time for Starting Drugs.**

Three Tips for Keeping Teens Safe from  
Addiction During Summer  
Sue Birkenshaw in Resource Guide  
May 17, 2013



There is great truth to the old adage, “Idle hands are the Devil's playthings.” When people have little or nothing to do with their time, they can be expected to find

something to do, and it will not always be a good thing. This is especially true of teenagers, who will soon be let out of school for the summer vacation and will suddenly be freed up from the demands of waking up early, spending most of the day at school and then laboring into the evening at their homework while also trying to balance the other activities in their lives. The moment that school lets out for summer break, many of these teens will find their days wide open to do whatever they please.

There is a significant risk that they will start drinking or using drugs and that this could lead to addiction and other tragic consequences. For example, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that the summer months of June, July and August see the highest rates of fatal car accidents among teens aged 15-19 years old, and many of these accidents may be attributed to the use of drugs or alcohol. What can you as a parent do to keep your teens safe from addiction this summer? Here are three tips which may help:

There are many tips that can aid in preventing drug use amongst teens. These include:

#### **1. Help Them Get a Job**

The “summer job” is a teenage tradition dating back decades, and it is very often a rite of passage. Finding a job to work at during the summer is perhaps less common now, with more teens choosing to spend



their summer days inside playing video games and surfing the internet, but it is something which can be of great value to any young person. To begin with, there is the simple fact that your teen will have less free time. Even a part-time job can eat up a considerable portion of the weekly schedule. Your teen can also enjoy a boost in self-confidence based on the fact that he or she is now entering the adult world, living up to obligations outside of the house and performing a valuable service. Getting paid a weekly wage can also give your teen a boost in self-esteem, and as he or she is more capable of affording purchases, your teen is likely to experience a spark of purpose and drive.

Holding down a job can also serve to distract your teen from the "problems" which young people so often find themselves getting wrapped up in. Finding a job may be more difficult in today's economic recession or depression, but your teen can experience the same or even greater benefits from volunteering with a community service organization which provides help to a cause that he or she cares about.

## 2. Make Sure They Know About All Kinds of Drugs

No doubt your teen knows that marijuana, cocaine, and heroin are drugs. What he or she may not realize is that many of the prescription medications which are so widespread in America today are at least as dangerous as street drugs, and some of them even more so. Adderall and Ritalin, for example, are chemically identical or

similar to speed and cocaine, respectively. Prescription painkillers such as Vicodin and OxyContin are both derived from opium and as such, they are cousins to heroin. Many teens start abusing prescription drugs, thinking that because they come from doctors and have FDA approval they are somehow less dangerous. Similarly, there is an increasing trend among young people of using the new synthetic drugs such as bath salts and synthetic marijuana. These drugs are frequently marketed as "herbal incense," "plant food" and "bath salts." Despite their innocuous sounding names, they are powerful drugs which can have harmful side effects. Make sure that your teen understands that all of these substances are drugs and are no safer than any other type of drug.

## 3. Spend More Time With Them

While your teens may have enormous amounts of free time during the summer, you still have to work. You should not, however, pass on the opportunity to spend more time with your children over the summer months. Find a way to fit more family time into your busy schedule, both in the evenings during the week and on the weekends. By doing so, you will be increasing the level of parental supervision which your teens receive, since you will be able to ask them more about what is going on in their lives and will have a chance to spot warning signs when they come up. You will also have the opportunity to form closer bonds with your children. Every moment spent playing a board game, hiking, playing sports outside,

working on a project around the house, cooking a meal or doing anything else together is a moment when you can build a stronger relationship with your children. They will feel more loved and supported and will know that they can come to you for help, rather than turning to drugs or alcohol when they feel stressed. They will also feel more motivation to avoid doing things which would let you down, including engaging in chemical substance use. Today's busy world makes it harder for mothers and fathers to really be parents to their children, but you can use the summer break to spend more time with your kids and to help them stay away from drinking and drugs.

### Drug Testing- Should You Drug Test Your child?

Are you thinking of drug testing your teen? If so, keep these pros and cons in mind before you make that final decision.



### Pros And Cons Of Using Drug Test Kits For Your Teen

By, Partnership for Drug-Free Kids 2020 by *Dominica Applegate, Dec 31, 2020*

Teens. One minute you're sitting around laughing with them and the next they're yelling at you about how unfair it is that they have a curfew. The truth is that the teen years can be a bit of a challenge at times. One day you're bragging to your co-workers that your teen came home and cleaned the entire kitchen without being asked four times and the next you're venting to them about how disrespectful he was that morning.

Yes, teens will be teens, but what about those parents that are wondering if they're teens are using drugs? They may see signs of addiction, yet they have no proof and the teen certainly isn't offering a confession.

While it is tempting to purchase a drug test and test your teen at home, you may also wonder how that will go over with your teen. Will he feel violated? Angry? Will it sever the relationship? You may also become stressed out thinking that the test will come back positive. How will you react? What will you do? It's very common to feel this way as a parent, so know that you're not alone in the way you're feeling. Home drug test kits have been around for many years and come in handy for parents who cannot trust that their teens are telling the truth about drug use. While they may not test for every drug out there, they do test for quite a few of them. They're also quite affordable, with marijuana tests costing only \$1 and [12 panel drug test kits](#) for less than \$10, testing for drugs such as cocaine, opiates, pain pills, marijuana, and

more.

But should you really drug test your teen at home? Is it worth the possible jeopardizing of your relationship?

Today, let's take a look at the pros and cons of doing so.

### Pros of teen drug testing

- You learn the truth. If the test comes back positive for drugs, you get to act. You get to sit down with your teen and have a serious conversation. You may be able to address the situation without it growing into an addiction or something bad happening.
- You get to be actively involved in your teen's life regarding drug use. You're not just shrugging it off hoping for the best. You're being proactive.
- You can let your teen know you'll be doing random drug testing. This may be enough for your teen to "Just Say No" when peers pressure him at school to try drugs.
- You get to practice open and honest communication with your teen. Don't let it become a trust issue. Just make it part of life as a teenager.

### Cons of teen drug testing

- You may create conflict between you and your teen. He may get angry and become resentful,

thinking that you don't trust him. He may stop talking to you and make you out to be the worst parent around. But do keep in mind he may have already done that to you various times when he did not get his way.

- Your teen could begin using drugs that aren't being screened in the drug test kit you are using.
- There is a very slight chance the test could produce false results, (false positive) which can really cause some upheaval in the home. The teen adamantly stating he's innocent, but the results stating otherwise. Some cold medications can cause a false-positive, as well as antibiotics. Doing a second drug test is recommended just to be sure.

### How should you give a drug test?



You can randomly give a drug test or you can let your teen know when you'll be giving one. It may seem awkward, but you can do your best to keep it light and non-confrontational. Decide ahead of time

what you will do if the test comes back positive or negative. You may want to reward your teen for negative results and of course, have consequences for positive results.

Back in 2007, The American Academy of Pediatrics released a statement that said, "Drug testing poses substantial risks—in particular, the risk of harming the parent-child relationship by creating an environment of resentment, distrust, and suspicion." However, many counselors disagree. They feel that drug testing may be helpful for teens to resist the peer pressure associated with drugs.

### Should I Be Worried About Substance Use If My Child Has an "Addictive Personality"?

OCTOBER 4, 2019 BY THE PARTNERSHIP



Are you worried that your risk-taking, "addictive personality" child might be more susceptible to substance use? Or are you wondering if you even *should* be worried?

### How Worried Should I Be About My Child's Drug Use?

So your son or daughter has started vaping, using drugs or drinking. Is this just what kids do? Is it going to lead to other drugs, or become a problem? Don't leave the answers to chance.

#### GOOD TO KNOW:

- 90% of addictions start during the teen years.
- Certain risk factors make some people more vulnerable to addiction.
- *It's never too early to speak up and address teen substance use.*

#### HOW TO ADDRESS TEEN SUBSTANCE USE:

- Prepare and plan for the conversation ahead.
- Remember to make it a conversation, not a confrontation.
- Set limits and monitor behavior.
- Use positive reinforcement to encourage behavior change.

#### HELP FOR PARENTS:

- Connect with our Helpline for free, one-on-one help from a trained specialist.
- Read the Parent Blog for expert advice and perspective from other families.
- Learn how to address vaping with your son or daughter.
- Learn how to address underage drinking.
- Learn how to talk about marijuana with your teen or young adult.

### How Worried Do I Need to Be?

Ninety percent of addictions start during the teen years. Beginning at age 10 through the mid-20's, massive changes are underway in the teen brain to develop capabilities related to impulse control, managing emotions, problem-solving and anticipating consequences. Substance use during this time period can prime the brain to be more susceptible to addiction and other mental health disorders, especially for kids who are more vulnerable.

### How Do I Know if My Child is More Vulnerable to Addiction?

Any substance use has negative effects on a teen brain. But your child is more vulnerable to addiction if any of these risk factors are present:

- Mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety and/or ADHD
- Family history of substance use disorders or other addictions related to gambling, food, sex, etc.
- Past trauma, such as a family death; divorce; or verbal, physical or sexual abuse
- An "addictive personality", a term used by many parents to describe a child who often acts without concern for the consequences, has difficulty following or obeying rules, and is engaged in other risky behaviors.

If any of these are a factor for your child, it's especially important to take any substance use seriously, and act.

### Take Action

Many parents feel that there isn't much more they can do beyond lecturing or punishing their kid if they're caught drinking or using other drugs. But there are proven ways to motivate your child to dial back their substance use. You can have a conversation with your child about substance use without it imploding, and begin encouraging healthy behaviors you want to see and discouraging those that you don't – especially those related to substance use.

## Facebook Falls Short for College Kids Battling Depression, Study Finds

Author: Scottye Cash, Jan. 19, 2020

Turning to Facebook for help is probably the wrong move for depressed college students, new research shows.

In a small study of 33 students who posted on Facebook about feelings of depression, not one was advised to reach out to a mental health professional for help. Rather, friends sent supportive and encouraging messages.

"It makes me concerned that none of the Facebook friends of students in this study were proactive in helping their friend get help," said lead author Scottye Cash, an associate professor of social work at Ohio State University, in Columbus. "We need to figure out why."

Read More [here](#)

### Good News for People with Persistent Anxiety

National Alliance on Mental Health; *Journal of Affective Disorders*, Jan. 8, 2020



A diagnosis of generalized anxiety disorder need not be a life sentence, a large Canadian study suggests. So which respondents with a history of anxiety had better odds of attaining complete mental health?

The study pointed to those who were white, female, married, in good or excellent physical health and without a major depressive disorder. Those who were more likely to attain complete mental health also had no history of alcohol or drug dependence; were not obese; and did not suffer chronic insomnia.

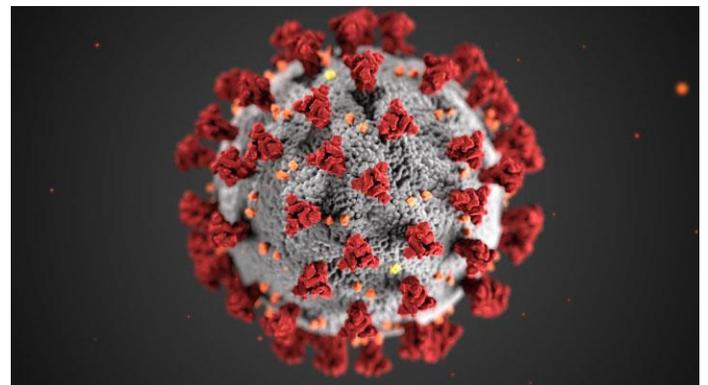
Also key: They used religion or spirituality to cope and had someone to confide in. "There is hope," Fuller-Thomson said. "There is a great deal of recovery, even for people who have suffered for a decade or

more.

Read More [here](#)

### COVID-19: Potential Implications for Individuals with Substance Use Disorders

NIH National Institute on Drug Abuse  
March 12, 2020



This illustration, created at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reveals ultrastructural morphology exhibited by coronaviruses. Note the spikes that adorn the outer surface of the virus, which impart the look of a corona surrounding the virion, when viewed electron microscopically. A novel coronavirus, named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China in 2019. The illness caused by this virus has been named coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

As people across the U.S. and the rest of



the world contend with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the research community should be alert to the possibility that it could hit some populations with substance use disorders (SUDs) particularly hard. Because it attacks the lungs, **the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 could be an especially serious threat to those who smoke tobacco or marijuana or who vape. People with opioid use disorder (OUD) and methamphetamine use disorder may also be vulnerable due to those drugs' effects on respiratory and pulmonary health.** Additionally, individuals with a substance use disorder are more likely to experience homelessness or incarceration than those in the general population, and these circumstances pose unique challenges regarding transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. All these possibilities should be a focus of active surveillance as we work to understand this emerging health threat.

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 is believed to have jumped species from other mammals (likely bats) to first infect humans in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, in late 2019. It attacks the respiratory tract and appears to have a higher fatality rate than seasonal influenza. The exact fatality rate is still unknown, since it depends on the number of undiagnosed and asymptomatic cases, and further analyses are needed to determine those figures. Thus far, deaths and serious illness from COVID-19 seem concentrated among those who are older and who have underlying health issues, such as diabetes,

cancer, and respiratory conditions. It is therefore reasonable to be concerned that compromised lung function or lung disease related to smoking history, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), could put people at risk for serious complications of COVID-19.

**Co-occurring conditions including COPD, cardiovascular disease, and other respiratory diseases have been found to worsen prognosis in patients with other coronaviruses that affect the respiratory system, such as those that cause [SARS and MERS](#).** According to a case series published in [JAMA](#) based on data from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention ([China CDC](#)), the case fatality rate (CFR) for COVID-19 was 6.3 percent for those with chronic respiratory disease, compared to a CFR of 2.3 percent overall. In China, 52.9 percent of men smoke, in contrast to just 2.4 percent of women; further analysis of the emerging COVID-19 data from China could help determine if this disparity is contributing to the higher mortality observed in men compared to women, as reported by China CDC. While data thus far are preliminary, they do highlight the need for further research to clarify the role of underlying illness and other factors in susceptibility to COVID-19 and its clinical course.

**Vaping, like smoking, may also harm lung health. Whether it can lead to COPD is still unknown, but emerging evidence suggests that exposure to aerosols from e-cigarettes harms the cells of the lung and diminishes**



**the ability to respond to infection.** In [one NIH-supported study](#), for instance, influenza virus-infected mice exposed to these aerosols had enhanced tissue damage and inflammation.

**People who use opioids at high doses medically or who have OUD face separate challenges to their respiratory health. Since opioids act in the brainstem to slow breathing, their use not only puts the user at risk of life-threatening or fatal overdose, it may also cause a harmful decrease in oxygen in the blood (hypoxemia).** Lack of oxygen can be especially damaging to the brain; while brain cells can withstand short periods of low oxygen, they can suffer damage when this state persists. Chronic respiratory disease is already known to [increase overdose mortality](#) risk among people taking opioids, and thus diminished lung capacity from COVID-19 could similarly endanger this population.

**A history of methamphetamine use may also put people at risk. Methamphetamine constricts the blood vessels, which is one of the properties that contributes to pulmonary damage and pulmonary hypertension in people who use it.**

Clinicians should be prepared to monitor the possible adverse effects of methamphetamine use, the prevalence of which is increasing in our country, when treating those with COVID-19.

We know very little right now about COVID-19 and even less about its intersection with substance use disorders. But we can make

educated guesses based on past experience that people with compromised health due to smoking or vaping and people with opioid, methamphetamine, cannabis, and other substance use disorders could find themselves at increased risk of COVID-19 and its more serious complications—for multiple physiological and social/environmental reasons. The research community should thus be alert to associations between COVID-19 case severity/mortality and substance use, smoking or vaping history, and smoking- or vaping-related lung disease. We must also ensure that patients with substance use disorders are not discriminated against if a rise in COVID-19 cases places added burden on our healthcare system.

As we strive to confront the major health challenges of opioid and other drug overdoses—and now the rising infections with COVID-19—NIDA encourages researchers to request supplements that will allow them to obtain data on the risks for COVID-19 in individuals experiencing substance use disorder