



# DRUGS AND THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

## THE BIG PICTURE

DRUGS LIMIT A BRAIN'S POTENTIAL.

Drug use can have a particularly negative effect on the teen brain because it is undergoing so many changes. Using drugs during this time can change the brain for life. The cycle of use-reward-crash can make it more likely that a young person will struggle with addiction later in life. Not only does drug use harm the developing brain, but it can also lead young adults to engage in other risky behaviors that negatively impact their life.

## WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

**Poor academic performance:** Lower grades, decreased interest, and increased absenteeism

**Social problems:** Difficulty forming relationships with others and having healthy self-esteem

**Cognition issues:** Trouble remembering and staying focused

**Addiction:** Increased likelihood of developing a substance use disorder

## WHO'S AT RISK?

Genetics can have a big influence on which people suffer from addiction, but environmental factors also play an important role in determining who struggles. Factors like socioeconomics, home life, consistent presence of parents and adult role models, healthy peer relationships, access to activities and outlets, and not having drugs easily available can make a big difference.





**50% OF ALL  
18-YEAR-  
OLDS HAVE  
TRIED  
ILLEGAL  
DRUGS**

## **HOW TO MINIMIZE RISK**

- Clear understanding of negative effects
- Community engagement
- Supportive friends and family
- Drug-free environment
- Practice refusal skills
- Participation in various activities

## **HOW TO HELP**

The best way to avoid the negative impacts of drugs on the young brain is to avoid using. The first step is talking and learning about the risk of using drugs and what they can do to a developing brain. If use is an issue, there are many places to get help, including:

**National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)  
or [findtreatment.gov](http://findtreatment.gov)**

**SMART CHOICES + NO DRUGS  
= STRONGER BRAIN**