

# Substance Use and Abuse

What Parents Should Know



## Times Have Changed

Drugs trends in the United States continue to evolve. The availability of new drug formulations and the ways young people obtain them may be difficult for parents to keep up with. It is can be surprising when we learn about the dangerous things some young people do, especially when it comes to drug use.

In this newsletter you will learn about new methods used to obtain drugs, which legal and illegal ones have become more prevalent among youth, and information intended to help parents initiate important conversations with their children, adding a layer of protection against recreational drug use.

## Marijuana Edibles

Edible marijuana products have become a stealth way of getting high for some teens. Marijuana edibles, also known as cannabis or THC edibles, are food and drink products like soda, baked goods, and candy, that have been infused with marijuana.

Unlike inhaled cannabis, the THC in edibles must be digested before being absorbed and entering into bloodstream. This delay may cause users to consume more because they don't feel the intended effects right away.

In 2020, the American Association of Poison Control Centers reported more than 3,000 exposures to edible marijuana products involving children ages 12 and under in the United States. Most of these exposures were in kids five years old or younger.



PREVENTION SERVICES

## IN THIS ISSUE

Marijuana Edibles	1
Snapchat Drugs	2
Emoji Drug Codes	2
Nitrous Oxide	2
NIDA Trends	2
Prescription Drugs	3
Fentanyl	3
Counterfeit Pills	3
Isotonitazine	3
Kratom	4
Delta-8	4
For Parents	4
Marijuana Concentrates	4

## Snapchat Drugs

Social media has become a common platform for people to connect. It gives your child access to socialize with a large variety of people with whom they share interests. Some are people they know; some are not. And some of them may be drug dealers.

There have been several known instances of kids purchasing illegal substances via social media. Reports have come from at least 15 states of counterfeit pills posing as Xanax, Percocet, or Oxycontin which instead contain a lethal amount of fentanyl being sold on Snapchat.

Snapchat's parent company, Snap Inc., has responded by strengthening its proactive detection efforts, providing in-app education, and collaborating with law enforcement. Other social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, have also stated that they have taken measures to stop the sale of illicit drugs on their sites.

Even with these increased efforts, this new drug trend remains a concern for millions of parents, since dealers are likely to continue their efforts to evade detection and enforcement.

***"It was as easy as ordering a pizza... He delivered right to our house."***

*- Matt C., whose daughter died after taking a deadly pill bought on social media (Solon, 2021)*

## Emoji Drug Code

Drug traffickers are using emojis to buy and sell illicit drugs through e-commerce and on social media, making them available to anyone with a smartphone.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) created a reference guide and poster intended to give parents, caregivers, educators, and other influencers a better sense of how the language of emojis is being used in conjunction with fake prescription pills, commonly laced with deadly fentanyl and methamphetamine.

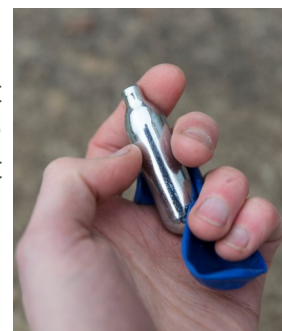
[Click for Emoji Code Guide](#)

[Click for Emoji Code Poster](#)

## Nitrous Oxide

There are some drugs that are popular among adolescents that adults may be less aware of. One of them is nitrous oxide, which is laughing gas, also known as whippits. Given that it is legal, widely available, and relatively cheap, it's not surprising that its use is rapidly increasing. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, teens 16 to 17 years-old are the most common age group that abuses nitrous oxide.

N<sub>2</sub>O is commonly found in pressurized canisters, but is often transferred into balloons to inhale. Users will feel a quick rush or high, and may feel intoxicated, giddy, euphoric, calm, or relaxed after inhaling the gas. Because the effects are so short-lived, it's more likely to discover the paraphernalia used than it is to catch the user high.



The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) uses multiple sources to monitor the prevalence and trends regarding drug use in the United States.

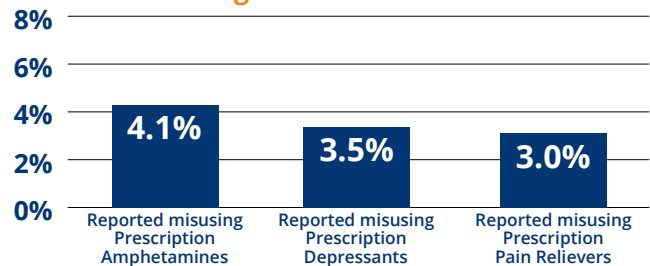
[NIDA Drug Trends and Statistics](#)

## Prescription Drugs

According to the 2021 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, 4.1% of Florida high school students reported they had misused prescription amphetamines (like Adderall), 3.5% reported they had misused prescription depressants, and 3% reported they had misused prescription pain relievers.

### 2021 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey

#### FL High School Students



## Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. It is a major contributor to fatal and non-fatal overdoses in the United States. Pharmaceutical fentanyl was created in 1959 to treat severe pain, especially after surgery and for advanced-stage cancer. However, most recent cases of fentanyl-related overdose are linked to illicitly manufactured fentanyl, which is distributed through illegal drug markets for its heroin-like effect. It is often added to other drugs because of its extreme potency, which makes drugs cheaper, and more powerful, addictive, and dangerous.

Fentanyl use can cause confusion, drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, changes in pupil size, cold and clammy skin, coma, and respiratory failure leading to death. It only takes a very small dose of fentanyl (2 milligrams) to be lethal, such as the amount found on the tip of a pencil.



## Counterfeit Pills

International and domestic criminal drug networks are mass-producing and flooding the U.S. with lethal counterfeit pills containing fentanyl and methamphetamine. These fake pills are made to look like other popular prescription opioids or stimulants. In 2021, the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) seized 20 million fake pills, often laced with fentanyl, which was more than the last 2 years combined. DEA lab testing revealed that 2 out of every 5 pills with fentanyl contain a potentially lethal dose, and these have been identified in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Young people may be more vulnerable to this deadly trend, as they are more likely to obtain the prescription pills from online pharmacies or other illegal means. The DEA's ["One Pill Can Kill"](#) campaign was created to help inform the public about the dangers of counterfeit pills. It has many resources regarding this growing problem. They warn that pills purchased outside of a licensed pharmacy are illegal, dangerous, and potentially deadly.

## Isotonitazene

In March of 2022, Attorney General Ashley Moody recorded a [PSA](#) warning Floridians of a new, deadly synthetic opioid found in Florida called Isotonitazene—commonly referred to as ISO. Isotonitazene is not an approved pharmaceutical product and is not approved for medical use anywhere in the world. Like fentanyl, this new synthetic opioid is being mixed with other drugs and appearing in the illicit drug market. However, ISO is approximately 20 to 100 times stronger than fentanyl.

## Kratom

Kratom is an herbal extract that comes from the leaves of tree grown in Southeast Asia. Kratom is typically used in the form of a pill, capsule, or extract. The DEA lists kratom as a “Drug and Chemical of Concern”, but it is not regulated by the FDA. The effects of kratom differ depending on the amount used. At low doses, kratom produces stimulant effects, such as increased energy, sociability, and alertness. In large doses, it produces pleasurable, pain-reducing effects like opioids do.



Kratom is legal in Florida except in Sarasota County. In Florida, there are no age restrictions for buying it and it is widely available in gas stations, convenience stores, smoke shops, and online. Since kratom is made from a plant and legal, teens might assume it is safe to use. In Lee County, there are several “bars” that do not serve alcohol, but serve drinks containing kratom and delta-8, as well as other botanical elixirs.

## Delta-8

Delta-8 is one of 113 cannabinoids found in cannabis and is a variant of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). In Florida, anyone 18 years of age or older may use, possess, sell, distribute, or produce delta-8, even though it has psychoactive and intoxicating effects, causing a “high” when consumed. It is also gaining popularity in states that have not legalized recreational marijuana.

The FDA has not evaluated or approved delta-8 for safe use. The U.S. Hemp Authority has stopped certifying delta-8 THC products and advises companies to cease producing delta-8. The FDA opposes the use, possession, and sale of delta-8, sending warning letters to vendors allegedly selling illegal delta-8 products. Even so, delta-8 is currently available without regulations in many states.

## Marijuana Concentrates

Marijuana concentrates are extracted and condensed from cannabis. They have extraordinarily high THC levels that can range from 40-80%, compared to the 14-15% found in traditional (plant-based) cannabis. This high content of THC creates more intense psychological and physical effects that can increase the chance of a harmful reaction.

Vaping marijuana concentrates (called “dabbing”) is often preferred to smoking plant-based marijuana because it is smokeless, odorless, and easy to conceal.

Visit our [Prevention Services](#) web page for additional prevention resources.



PREVENTION SERVICES

PERSONAL | PASSIONATE | PROGRESSIVE

## For Parents

It is important for parents and caregivers to start talking with their children early about the dangers of substance use. Do this by showing that you:

- disapprove of drug misuse and underage drinking
- care about your child’s health, wellness, and success
- are a good source of information regarding substance use
- are paying attention and will discourage risky behaviors
- will help your child make a plan to avoid substance use

For more information on how to protect your child from drug use, go to:

**SAMHSA’s Talk. They Hear You.**