



ILLCIT DRUGS

The use of both legal and illicit drugs touches most Americans directly or indirectly. When our coworkers or fellow students use drugs, the effectiveness of our own work is diminished. If the car we drive was assembled by a drug user at the plant, we are in danger. Our safety is jeopardized if the driver, engineer or pilot is using drugs while transporting us.

Laws are made in an effort to safeguard the members of our society. The drug laws in force now are a combination of federal, state and local laws that have accumulated since the passage of the Harrison Act in 1914. Under the Controlled Substances Act (1970), persons cannot lawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense or possess with intent to distribute any of the illegal drugs.

Federal laws are enforceable throughout the United States, but individual states have their own laws, as do cities and counties. The most important implication in the drug issue is your own personal behavior and choices. Knowing the negative consequences of participating in the use of illicit drugs, it is our desire that you will make a healthy **choice**.

FACT—A controlled drug is a drug whose possession, manufacture, distribution and sale are controlled by law. A prescription is needed to obtain controlled drugs. *Illegal drug use* is the use of a controlled drug without a prescription.

WHY DO PEOPLE USE ILLICIT DRUGS

Human beings often desire to alter their consciousness. We like to feel different. Children spinning until dizzy or adults enjoying a thrilling high-speed activity, these are ways of altering consciousness. Illicit drugs, in particular, produce altered awareness. The laws against the use of these substances recognize the potential dangers associated with these substances. But, at the same time, these laws contribute to the mystique and risk surrounding illicit drug use.

The use of illegal drugs has physical, emotional, social and legal consequences. People who develop drug problems generally begin with the belief that they will receive benefits from, and can control, their drug use. The affinity of the human body for many chemical substances is strong enough to override the best intentions. The majority of the illegal drugs produce physical and psychological dependence, and to believe these substances can be used regularly without developing addiction is foolhardy.

Hundreds of illicit drugs exist. The dangers inherent with the use of illegal drugs are magnified because technology enables drug manufacturers to produce more powerful, and therefore, more dangerous, illegal substances.

Drug users typically exhibit problems in several areas of their lives. These warning signs may also be signs of physical or emotional problems; they can also help detect a drug problem before it gets out of control. If someone you know is showing any of these signs, be a friend. Listen to the person, share what you know about drugs and encourage him or her to seek help from a counselor, a teacher, a relative or a clergy person. Encourage the person to call **the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 800-729-6686** for information and treatment referrals. A searchable database of treatment providers is also available online at <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>.

WARNING SIGNS OF ILLICIT DRUG USE

Physical Problems

- Fatigue
- Change in eating or sleeping patterns
- Repeated health complaints
- Red and glazed eyes
- Difficulty concentrating
- Disinterest in personal grooming and physical appearance

Social Problems

- Hanging out with new friends
- Problems with the law
- Changes to less conventional styles in dress and music
- Loss of interest hobbies, sports or other activities

Emotional Problems

- Personality change
- Sudden mood changes; irritability
- Irresponsible behavior
- Low self-esteem
- Poor judgment; depression
- A general lack of interest

Family Problems

- Deteriorating relationships
- Starting arguments
- Breaking rules

School Problems

- Decreased interest
- Negative attitude
- Drop in grades
- Irregular attendance
- Discipline problems