



# BEING A STUDENT ATHLETE REQUIRES MORE DISCIPLINE THAN YOU'D EXPECT

Participating in sports can be an incredibly positive experience for your teen – one that strengthens the body and the mind, develops teamwork and leadership skills, and instills confidence and self-discipline.

Despite its many benefits, sports participation is also associated with greater substance use. Whether alcohol and drugs are used to relieve the stress of performance pressure, to treat pain from injuries, or to celebrate after a game, research shows that student athletes are more likely to use drugs and alcohol than non-athletes.<sup>1</sup>

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# IT'S IMPORTANT TO TALK WITH YOUR STUDENT ATHLETE ABOUT AVOIDING ALCOHOL AND DRUGS. HERE'S WHY:

## SUBSTANCE USE IS HARMFUL TO THE DEVELOPING TEENAGE BRAIN

Your teenager's brain is still growing and changing until around age 25. Using alcohol or drugs during this important growth phase can actually interfere with the brain's development and rewire the brain for addiction. When teens start using alcohol or drugs at a young age, they are more likely to develop a substance use problem later in life.<sup>2</sup> In addition, students who use alcohol or marijuana regularly (defined as once a week or more) tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school,<sup>3</sup> which can negatively impact college and career options.

### ALCOHOL HURTS ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE



- Alcohol decreases mental sharpness, hand-eye coordination, and reaction time for up to several days after drinking.
- Alcohol causes dehydration and prevents muscle recovery.
- Alcohol prevents the absorption of nutrients and causes the body to lose the important vitamins and minerals required for peak performance – it can take 3 to 4 days for athletes to recover.
- Alcohol interferes with sleep, which is necessary for muscle recovery.<sup>4</sup>
- Athletes who drink alcohol regularly are more than twice as likely to be injured as non-drinkers.

### MARIJUANA HURTS ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE



- Marijuana reduces perceptual accuracy, hand-eye coordination, and reaction time – skill impairment may last several days after use.
- Marijuana use reduces oxygen in the blood and accelerates muscle fatigue.<sup>5</sup>
- Marijuana use causes the heart to beat about 50% faster and increases blood pressure, which significantly increases the risk of a heart attack immediately after smoking.<sup>6</sup>
- Marijuana smoke contains many of the same toxins and carcinogens as tobacco smoke and causes the same respiratory illnesses that can significantly harm an athlete's performance in the long run.
- Marijuana use reduces motivation and drive, and use during adolescence has been linked to a greater risk in the development of depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses.<sup>7</sup>

## TALK WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT HOW SUBSTANCE USE CAN HURT PERFORMANCE BOTH ON AND OFF THE FIELD

Talk with your teen about avoiding alcohol and drugs so that they can bring their best self to each game. Help your teenager understand that alcohol and drugs will hurt their performance as an individual and as a team, as well as negatively impact their brain development. These conversations make a difference. Studies show that teens who talk with their parents about how alcohol and drugs interfere with their athletic performance and ability to do well in school are less likely to use them.

For facts, conversation starters, and tips on how to have these conversations with your teen, visit [RaisingHealthyTeens.org](http://RaisingHealthyTeens.org).

1. "Alcohol Use in Adolescents: The Scope of the Problem and Strategies for Intervention." American Athletic Institute, [www.americanathleticinstitute.org/about/index.html](http://www.americanathleticinstitute.org/about/index.html).

2. "Underage Drinking." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm).

3. General information on marijuana. National Institute on Drug Abuse, [www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana).

4. "Alcohol's Effect on Sleep." The National Sleep Foundation, [www.sleep.org/articles/alcohols-effect-on-sleep](http://www.sleep.org/articles/alcohols-effect-on-sleep).

5. Whiteman, Honor. "Marijuana 'may be worse than cigarettes for cardiovascular health.'" Medical News Today, Healthline Media, 9 August 2017, [www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/318854.php](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/318854.php).

6. "Marijuana and heart health: What you need to know." Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School, August 2017, [www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/marijuana-and-heart-health-what-you-need-to-know](http://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/marijuana-and-heart-health-what-you-need-to-know).

7. General information on marijuana. National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens, [www.teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/marijuana](http://www.teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/marijuana).

