

Chapter 20

Substance Use and Abuse by Children and Adolescents

Scope of the problem of substance abuse in childhood and adolescence

- Childhood chemical abuse patterns
 - In 31 states parents can legally give alcohol to children under the age of 21
 - 77.4% of H.S. seniors reported having abused alcohol at least once
 - Adolescents make up 12-20% of the entire US alcohol market
 - 4.3 million adolescents consume alcohol each year
 - 508,000 adolescents consume alcohol each day
 - 33% of 8th graders and 70% of 12th graders have used alcohol at least once

Scope of the problem of substance abuse in childhood and adolescence

- Adolescents substance abuse patterns
 - In 2011 marijuana the most commonly abused to illicit compound
 - A growing problem is the diversion of prescriptions for illicit use
 - 25% of H.S. students report having used a medication prescribed for somebody else

Why worry about SUDs in childhood and adolescence?

- Adolescent cigarette smokers are 50% more likely to develop an AUD later in life
- SUDs are the leading cause of mortality and/or having unprotected sex for older adolescents
- The neurological factor
 - Cognitive assessment/control systems of the brain lag behind the growth in the brain's reward system during adolescence
 - Risk of developing an AUD is 4 to 6 times higher for adolescents who begin drinking before the age of 15 as compared to those who begin at age of 21

Tobacco abuse by children and adolescents

- Estimated 3 million cigarette smokers in the US under the age 18
- Downward trend for adolescent cigarette smoking in the US during the past decade
- Each day 4,400 children or adolescents smoke their first cigarette
- Stages of childhood/adolescents smoking
 - Preparatory
 - Initiation
 - Experimentation
 - transition

Why do children and adolescents abuse chemicals?

- SUDS in these groups are influenced by genetic heritage, environmental factors, and life events
- 5 basic reasons for use:
 - To feel grown up
 - To take risks or rebel against authority
 - To fit into a specific peer group
 - To relax and feel good
 - To satisfy curiosity about the drug's effects

Why do children and adolescents abuse chemicals?

- Racial/ethnic group membership
- Gender difference
 - Males more likely to abuse illicit drugs by 2 to 1 margin
- Parent-adolescent relationship patterns
 - Strong relationship between parental substance use during the childhood years and later used of the adolescent
 - Adolescents who report highest levels of parental monitoring have lower levels of substance abuse
 - Parents underestimate teenaged alcohol consumption by a factor of 4 to 1

Why do children and adolescents abuse chemicals?

- Siblings
- Vocational/Occupational choices
- Adolescent mood states
 - Adolescents with higher levels of cortisol were more vulnerable to SUDs
 - Substance use patterns must be viewed within context of emotional adjustment in teen years
- Conduct disorder/oppositional defiant disorder
 - Known relationship
 - 50-80% of adolescents with diagnosis of CD will develop an SUD at some point

Why do children and adolescents abuse chemicals?

- Peer group influences
 - Abstinence from alcohol or illicit chemicals is more likely to be a planned behavior rather than response to external constraints
 - Peer groups not always negative
 - Parents still remain a strong influence on fundamental issues in adolescents
 - Might influence initiation of substance use but less so in supporting it continued use
 - Adolescents may gravitate towards peer groups with similar views towards substance abuse

Why do children and adolescents abuse chemicals?

- Telecommunications
- Religious affiliation
- Music selection
- Personal values
- Rebellion
- Insomnia
- Abuse history or victimization
 - Abuse in childhood may relate to later SUD development
- employment

Substance abuse: How much and when does it become too much?

- Prevention
 - More cost effective than treating after the development of SUD
- Childhood
 - Early onset alcohol use (before age 13) might reflect a genetic predisposition
- Adolescents
 - Only 11% of adolescents abstain from all chemicals throughout adolescence

Substance abuse: How much and when does it become too much?

- Stages of adolescent substance abuse
- Adolescent addiction to chemicals
- Problems in diagnosis and treatment of adolescent SUDs
 - Diagnostic standards derived from adult SUD
 - Lack tools needed to separate those adolescents who abuse from those who are addicted
 - 1.1 million adolescents meet criteria for admission to treatment but only 1 in 10 ever admitted

Screening/assessment tools

- Difference between a screening and an assessment tool
- Assessment instruments
 - CRAFFT
 - TWEAK
 - Drug Use Screening Inventory-Revised (DUSI-R)
 - The Drug and Alcohol Problem (DAP) Quick Screen
 - Problem Oriented Screening Instrument for Teenagers (POSIT)
 - Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory-3 (SASSI-3)

Possible diagnostic criteria for childhood and adolescent SUD

- Possible indicators to look for:
 - Having a friend or close sibling who uses alcohol or drugs.
 - Social problems
 - Poor impulse control
 - Engaging in risk-taking behavior(s)
 - Poor parental supervision and/or inconsistent discipline
 - Trauma (including parental divorce)
 - Victimization
 - Poor academic performance
 - Parental alcoholism

Consequences of a SUD in a child or adolescent

- Alcohol
 - Those under 21 are thought to consume 17-20% of all alcohol in US
- Cocaine
- Hallucinogens
- Inhalants
- Marijuana
 - 4.5 million teens used marijuana in 2008
 - 33-40% who smoke marijuana will become addicted

Consequences of a SUD in a child or adolescent

- Methamphetamine
- Tobacco
 - 660,000 middle school and 3 million H.S. students smoke
- Opioids
 - The issue of child/adolescent abuse of opioids is of special concern since the abuse of these compounds is growing in popularity

Adolescent rehabilitation programs

- The special needs of adolescent substance abuse rehabilitation programs
- Referral sources
 - “Drug courts”
- Adolescents substance abuse treatment: a cause for optimism?
 - Every years of delay of initiation drops risk for developing SUD by 5%
- Is there a financial incentive for over-diagnosis?
 - Many treatment facilities are “for profit”
- The danger of under diagnosis
 - SUDs play significant role in teen suicide