Reasons why you should choose not to use

Death

Liver disease

Cancer

Emphysema

Brain damage

Prison

Memory loss

Weakened immune system

Kidney failure

Weight fluctuation

High blood pressure

Heart attack and disease

Psychosis

Loss of ambition

Respiratory failure

Expense

Asphyxiation

Think it couldn't happen to you? People now suffering with terminal health problems or serving prison sentences thought so, too.

Even casual use can lead to the problems listed above and countless others.

If you have or someone you know has a substance-abuse problem, seek help immediately. Inform a trusted adult, such as a parent, teacher, coach, clergy member, counselor or doctor, or call a crisis hotline.

For more information on drug abuse:

Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups
888-4AL-ANON (425-2666)
www.al-anon.alateen.org
Phoenix House
888-352-1719
www.phoenixhouse.org

The National Institute on Drug Abuse
301-443-1124
teens.drugabuse.gov
www.drugabuse.gov

Partnership at Drugfree.org
855-378-4373
www.drugfree.org

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
877-696-6775
www.hhs.gov

SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug Abuse
1-877-SAMHSA-7 (726-4727)
www.samhsa.gov

THE AMERICAN LEGION
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COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
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THE AMERICAN LEGION
&
SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

GATEWAY DRUGS

Choose not to use.

Gateway drugs

The American Legion is concerned about young people using drugs and destroying their lives.

Alcohol, tobacco, inhalants and marijuana are often readily available and considered the entryway to a life of drug-dependency and delinquency. Using these gateway drugs is dangerous and can lead to drug abuse and addiction, plus more serious drugs, such as heroin, cocaine and LSD.

Drugs ruin the lives of users and often the lives of their friends and families. But peer pressure can be intense.

Remember, you are the one ultimately responsible for your decisions in life. The choices you make today can have far-reaching effects.

Familiarize yourself with the information and choose not to use. Live a healthy and productive lifestyle. After all, you are worth it!

Choose not to use

Alcohol

- Purchasing or drinking alcohol is illegal for anyone under 21 in all 50 states.
- About one in five youth drinkers develop alcohol dependency.
- Every year approximately 10,000 young people aged 15 to 24 are killed in alcohol-related incidents, including homicides, suicides and by drowning.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for those aged 15 to 20. Alcohol is involved in nearly a third of these deaths.

Tobacco

- Available in many forms, tobacco delivers nicotine to the body. Once hooked, this addiction can be one of the hardest to break.
- There is no safe form of tobacco use.
- Cigarette smoking causes more than 480,000 deaths in the United States every year.
- Many complications associated with tobacco manifest later in life, giving young users false assurances of good health.
- Most adult smokers started smoking during adolescence.
- Users who started smoking before 15 are seven times more likely to use cocaine than non-smokers.
- Smokeless tobacco is not a safe alternative to smoking.

Inhalants

- Inhaling or “huffing” solvents, gases, nitrates and commercial chemicals can cause immediate death or other irreversible damage.
- Inhaling can cause permanent damage to the brain and nervous system, and can decrease intellectual function and coordination.
- First-time users account for more than 20 percent of deaths caused by inhaling.
- Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome causes more than half of inhalation deaths and can occur anytime while inhaling.

Marijuana

- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main mood-altering chemical found in marijuana, impairs intellectual function, memory, judgment and motor skills.
- Marijuana smokers inhale up to five times more carbon monoxide and tar than cigarette smokers.
- THC adversely affects the brain, lungs, heart, reproductive and immune systems.
- Marijuana can impair growth and development.
- Loss of inhibition from the use of marijuana can lead to injuries and death.
- Studies show marijuana users are often lower achievers compared to non-users.