## 20 reasons why you should choose not to use

Death
Liver disease
Cancer
Emphysema
Brain damage
Prison
Memory loss
Weakened immune system
Kidney failure
Weight gain
High blood pressure
Heart disease
Psychosis
Loss of ambition
Respiratory failure
Illegal
Expensive
Criminal record
Asphyxiation
Heart attack

Think that it couldn't happen to you? People now suffering with terminal health problems or serving prison sentences used to think so too. Unfortunately, others have died as a result of their decision to use drugs. Even casual use can lead to the problems listed above and countless others. As a young person, you have a bright future ahead of you, so choose wisely and choose not to use.

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

***For more information on drug abuse:***

***Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups***
***888-4AL-ANON (425-2666)***
***al-anon.alateen.org***

***Phoenix House***
***888-286-5027***
***www.phoenixhouse.org***

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

***Partnership at Drug-Free.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***
***877-SAMHSA-7 (726-4727)***
***www.samhsa.gov***

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**www.legion.org/sons**

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# Gateway Drugs

*Choose not to use*

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

# Gateway Drugs

Sons of The American Legion is very concerned about young people destroying their lives by using drugs.

Alcohol, tobacco, inhalants and marijuana are often readily available and considered to be the entryway to a life of drug dependency and delinquency. Gateway drugs are so-called because the use of these drugs often leads to drug abuse, addiction, and to the use of other drugs such as heroin, cocaine and LSD.

Using drugs will ruin your life and often the lives of your friends and family. Growing up today is hard enough without drugs, but peer pressure can be extremely intense. Remember, you are the one that is ultimately responsible for your decisions in life. The choices you make today can have far-reaching effects for years to come.

Sons of The American Legion hopes that you take the time to familiarize yourself with the information in this brochure and learn the dangers of gateway drugs. "Choose not to use" and live a healthy and productive lifestyle. After all, you are worth it!

## *Choose not to use*

### *Alcohol*

Underage drinking and the purchase of alcohol by anyone under 21 is illegal in all 50 states.

About one in five youth drinkers develop alcohol dependency.

Every year approximately 10,000 young people aged 15-24 are killed in alcohol-related incidents including homicide, suicide, drowning and accidents.

Driving under the influence of alcohol is the leading cause of death for people between the ages of 15 and 24.

There is an increasing number of energy drinks that also include large amounts of alcohol, which are being marketed toward young people. The combination of alcohol and caffeine makes these especially dangerous for young people.

### *Tobacco*

Used in many forms, tobacco delivers nicotine to the body and is extremely addictive. Once hooked, this addiction can be one of the hardest to break.

There is no safe form of tobacco use.

Tobacco is estimated to cause more than 400,000 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 are seven times more likely to use other drugs.

Smokeless tobacco is not a safe alternative to smoking.

### *Inhalants*

Inhaling or "huffing" commercial chemicals, solvents, gases, and nitrates is extremely dangerous and can cause immediate death or irreversible damage.

Inhaling can cause permanent damage to the brain and nervous system and decreases in intellectual function and coordination.

A variety of products can be lethal during and after inhalant use.

First-time users account for 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 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 cause injuries and death.

Studies consistently show that marijuana users are often lower-achievers compared to non-users.