



KEY:

Adolescents have a greater risk of becoming addicted to drugs because the brain is still developing. The parts of the brain that process feelings and pain develop during childhood, yet the front part of the brain that helps control emotions and make responsible decisions don't fully develop until a person is in his/her mid 20s.

- Dopamine (a natural chemical that makes you feel good) teaches the brain to repeat behaviors that are pleasurable. Substances such as nicotine, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, and prescription drugs increase the amount of dopamine in the brain, which creates a strong drive to repeat pleasurable experiences.
- The developing brain has a hard time using self-control and thinking about consequences (this is why children and teens are known for being risk takers).
- Teach your children how drugs can damage the developing brain and put them at a higher risk of becoming addicted.
- Use the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) websites to visually show your teen how drinking and drug abuse can affect his or her brain.