

Have a Safe and Sober Holiday Season

What comes to mind when you think of the holidays? Sitting in front of a warm glowing fire? Spending time with loved ones? Eating too much? Where does substance use fit into this picture?

Holiday parties give people more chances to use drugs and alcohol. The result is an increase in drug- and alcohol-related tragedies. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, at least 50 percent of all deadly car crashes that take place during the holiday season involve alcohol.

These factors may mean that your child is more exposed to substance abuse—whether it's an uncle who drinks too much during your holiday dinner or a friend who offers your child pot at a New Year's Eve party. The incidence of alcohol poisoning of children is common during the holiday season. So, during this time, it is especially important that parents keep their children safe and talk with them about staying away from drugs and alcohol.

Holiday Celebration Tips:

- Let your child know what you expect. Tell your child that adults may be drinking during the holidays but under no circumstances is she allowed drinking alcohol.
- At your holiday gatherings, offer plenty of nonalcoholic foods, drinks, and activities.
- To lower the risk of alcohol poisoning, be sure to throw out partly empty alcoholic drinks. Children love to imitate adults, and if they have access to leftover drinks, they may taste the contents.
- Have a plan in place about what you and your family will do if you are at a party where there are people who have had too much to drink.
- Model responsible behavior by making sure that guests who have been drinking do not drive.
- Why not create some substance-free holiday traditions for your family? It's a great way to show your child that you can have fun during the holidays without alcohol or drugs.

Alcohol-Free Holiday Tips:

- Plan a nonalcoholic holiday party with your child so children learn that they can have fun without alcohol. Send out invitations with alcohol- and drug-free messages on them, and make sure the guests know that yours will be a substance-free event.
- For your holiday meal, let your child help you prepare and serve traditional drinks without alcohol. You can make nonalcoholic cider, eggnog, or punch. Look for recipes for nonalcoholic beverages.
- Make sure your holiday festivities involve lots of delicious—and nonalcoholic—food, which your child can help you make.
- If your older child is going to a holiday event, call ahead to make sure that the event will be alcohol and drug free. Check in with the party planners to see what measures are in place to keep alcohol out.

If you have trouble controlling your own substance use during the holidays, you should seek help.

Explain to your potential gift-givers why you do not wish to receive holiday gifts of wine or other types of alcohol. This sets an example for your child. You are showing your child how to enjoy a safe, sober holiday season. The gift of an alcohol-free lifestyle lasts long after the holidays are over.



National News

Marijuana Use Rises in Popularity Among Teens

By [Join Together Staff](#) | December 14, 2011

<http://www.drugfree.org/join-together>

Marijuana use is gaining in popularity among teens, according to [Monitoring the Future](#), an annual survey of eighth, 10th, and 12th-graders, [The New York Times](#) reports. The survey found one of every 15 high school seniors smokes marijuana on an almost daily basis.

About 25 percent of teens who took part in the study said they used marijuana in the past year, an increase from 21 percent in 2007. Daily marijuana use is at a 30-year peak among high school seniors. The findings indicate a decline in the perceived risk of harm associated with marijuana use, according to a [news release](#) by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which funds the survey.

R. Gil Kerlikowske, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, told the newspaper he believed the increasing prevalence of medicinal marijuana was a factor in the uptick. "These last couple years, the amount of attention that's been given to medical marijuana has been huge," he said. "And when I've done focus groups with high school students in states where medical marijuana is legal, they say 'Well, if it's called medicine and it's given to patients by caregivers, then that's really the wrong message for us as high school students.'"

Cigarette and alcohol use are at their lowest point since the survey began in 1975. Alcohol use in general and binge drinking in particular continued to gradually decline among teenagers. Energy drinks continue to be popular among teens—about one-third said they drink them.

The survey found 11.4 percent of high school seniors said they used synthetic marijuana, known as "Spice" and "K2," in the past year. This was the first year the survey included questions about synthetic drugs.

Use of prescription drugs such as Vicodin and Adderall declined, as did use of sedatives and tranquilizers, the article noted. Cocaine use also decreased.

Quality of Life Better for Ex-Smokers Than Current Smokers, Study Suggests

By [Join Together Staff](#) | December 14, 2011

<http://www.drugfree.org/join-together>



People who quit smoking report higher levels of health-related quality of life compared with people who continue to smoke, a new study shows. They also report fewer stressful situations, and more support by spouses or partners.

The study followed 1,504 smokers for three years after they quit smoking, and compared them with daily smokers who did not quit, the Los Angeles Times reports. While people in both groups reported a drop in overall quality of life, those who quit smoking had smaller decreases. Study participants who had quit smoking reported higher levels of health-related quality of life one year and three years after quitting smoking, compared with those who continued to smoke. After three years, ex-smokers reported fewer stressful situations; current smokers reported more.

While marital satisfaction stayed the same in both groups, people who had quit smoking reported more support by spouses or partners compared with current smokers.

The researchers write in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* that the findings could be useful to smokers who are concerned that quitting smoking will adversely impact their quality of life.

Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth to Sponsor 3rd-6th Grade Trip to see



Cinderella



at the Old Log Theatre

Wednesday, December 28, 2011

On **Wednesday December 28th** Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth of Brown County will be sponsoring a county-wide bus trip for 40 **3rd-6th grade students** and 8 adults to see the holiday production of '**Cinderella**' at the **Old Log Theatre** in Excelsior.

This will be a wonderful opportunity for children and adults to see professional actors perform the timeless story of Cinderella at one of Minnesota's oldest and most recognized Theatres located near beautiful Lake Minnetonka.

Showtime is 10am and a bus will leave from Springfield High School at 7am with stops at Sleepy Eye High School at 7:15 and New Ulm High School at 7:30.

Buses will return to locations between 1:30 and 2pm. Everyone who participates must ride the bus for this event.

Cost for this special trip is **\$20 per participant** which includes ticket and transportation. Participants should also pack a lunch which can be eaten on the way home.

Tickets and seats on the bus will be reserved on a first come first serve basis. To reserve your spots mail \$20 for each person (limit of two tickets per household) to Cinderella Trip, Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth, 125 South Broadway, New Ulm, MN 56073.

Parents should include a parental permission note with students name, grade, address and phone number plus email address so that we can confirm your reservation.

If you have any questions call Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth of Brown County at **354-8632** or **276-8628** or email hchynua@newulmtel.net.





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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

PARENT

THE POWER OF PARENTS

YOUR CHILD

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CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE - www.usacbrowncounty.org

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PARENTS WHO HOST LOSE THE MOST™

Don't be a party to teenage drinking.

It's against the law.

Celebrate a Safe & Sober Holiday Season

Brown County Underage Substance Abuse Coalition

Responsible Beverage Server Training

Coming in January

Thursday, January 19, 2012

6:00-8:00pm

Brown County Law Enforcement Center

Training Room – 15 South Washington, New Ulm

FREE TRAINING, no pre-registration required

The Underage Substance Abuse Coalition, in cooperation with the Brown County Law Enforcement agencies, will be sponsoring training regarding alcohol server responsibilities, alcohol laws, checking Identifications Cards (I.D.'s), prevention and recognition of alcohol intoxication and handling of difficult situations in licensed establishments, at community festivals, celebrations or fundraisers where alcohol is served.