



March 2024 issue:

- *The dangers of vaping, marijuana, & edible use in teens*
- *Drug use prevention – tips for parents*
- *Community therapeutic resources for addiction*



A monthly newsletter for Berkeley Institute parents promoting Wellness & Mental Health

Healthy Mind



Drug Use Prevention – Tips for Parents

- Be mindful of any confusing messages you are sending as a parent – even unknowingly. If adults are vaping or using marijuana in the home, young people may see nothing wrong with it. This may be the catalyst for them trying to smoke or use edible cannabis outside of school or discreetly at school.
- Have open and honest family discussions about drug use; in particular marijuana, edibles, and vaping, and the effects of all of these substances on the adolescent brain.
- Approach your child's drug use with curiosity and compassion rather than judgment. A critical statement may cause shame and deter them from being truthful about their drug use in future.
- Reach out to the local therapeutic resources included on the second page of this newsletter if you are concerned about your teen being addicted to marijuana or vaping.

The Dangers of Vaping, Marijuana, & Edible Cannabis Use in Teens

The use of electronic cigarettes is also known as “vaping.” Vapes are battery-operated and use an electric pulse to heat a flavoured liquid, which usually contains the addictive substance nicotine (Jones & Salzman, 2020). Over the last two decades, the U.S. has seen a substantial decline in adolescents smoking regular, combustible cigarettes and a sharp increase in vaping. This is, in part, due to strategic advertising on social media and on billboards around the U.S. directed at teenagers (Jones & Salzman, 2020). Vape packaging has also been made to look attractive to young people, with various flavors such as “mint, gummi bear, and frosted sugar cookie” (Jones & Salzman, 2020 p. 57). However, what teen consumers are often not aware of are the serious health risks associated with vaping. Nicotine is damaging to the developing adolescent brain and can cause cognitive and memory issues and problems with executive functioning, which involves organization, focus, behavior and time management, and emotional regulation (Jones & Salzman, 2020). E-cigarettes or vapes also contain a much higher amount of nicotine than traditional, combustible cigarettes. The brand JUUL, for example, contains approximately 59 milligrams per millilitre of nicotine, which is about 5% (Jones & Salzman, 2020). Marijuana and edible cannabis use in young people is equally as dangerous as vaping, and can be harmful for the brain when it is still under-developed. The brain does not fully develop until the age of 25, and marijuana and edible cannabis can also cause challenges related to focus, coordination, thinking, and problem-solving skills. More and more in Bermuda, adolescents are experimenting with edible cannabis, which

contains THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) and can be disguised in baked goods and candies. It causes a state of euphoria and intoxication, and can also have dangerous side effects such as vomiting, shaking, paranoia, and hallucinations. The effects of ingesting cannabis may linger for up to 24 hours (CCSA, 2019). In addition, there is a correlation between marijuana and a range of mental illnesses, such as depression, schizophrenia, anxiety and psychosis (CDC, 2021). The earlier and more frequently a young person smokes marijuana, the greater the risk for the onset of schizophrenia (CDC, 2021). In Bermuda, drug use in our adolescent population has become problematic. In a national school survey conducted in 2023 by the Department of National Drug Control in Bermuda, 13% of students surveyed from M2-M4 in both public, private, and home schools reported that they had

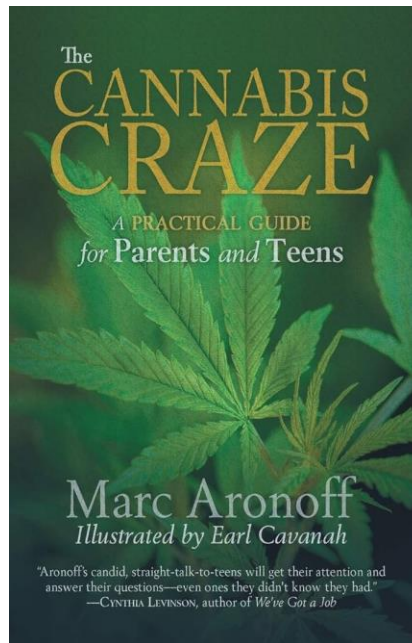
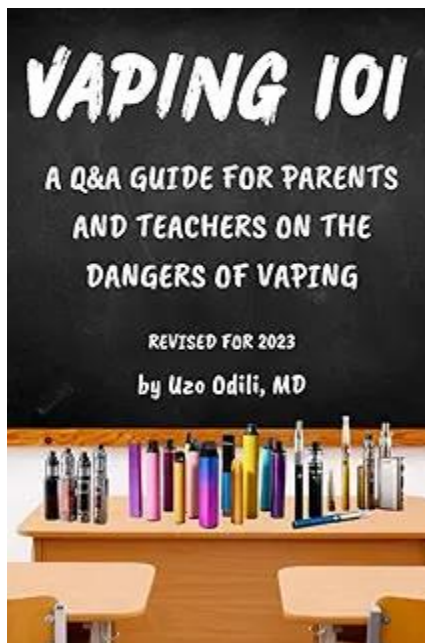
used marijuana in their lifetime, and 6% had used it in the past month (Department for National Drug Control, 2024). Of these same students, 16% stated that they had used nicotine or cannabis through a vape and 42% admitted to alcohol consumption in their lifetime (Department for National Drug Control, 2024).

In Bermuda, it is imperative that all stakeholders - (parents, relatives, teachers, government and mental health organizations, etc.) - address teen drug use through preventive education programs, family discussions, and community therapeutic resources. If your teen is addicted to vaping or other substances, harm reduction can be the first step in reducing usage. This may mean not expecting them to quit right away, but trying to get them to reduce daily consumption with the support of a trained professional.



What community resources can I use to help my child if he / she becomes addicted to vaping, marijuana, and edibles?

- ❖ **The Department of Child & Family Services – Counseling & Life Skills Services-** Provides counseling, education, and emotional support for young people and their families to cope with life challenges, relationships, and substance misuse / addiction in order to improve functioning. Call the 24-hour child hotline: 278-9111.
- ❖ **Focus Addiction Counseling Services -** Provides comprehensive substance use disorder, addiction treatment, and support services to the Bermuda community, including adolescents. Read their website for more information on their outpatient treatment services for adolescents and young adults : <https://focus.bm/adolescents-and-young-adults/>. Call 296-2196 or e-mail info.focus@focus.bm for more information.
- ❖ **Focus Addiction Counseling Services - After Hours Support Line -** The purpose of the support line is to provide alcohol and drug information and intervention support. The after-hours support line is a **confidential** phone service providing support and guidance for chemically dependent individuals and their families. This can also be considered an intervention and information/referral service. The support line functions as a part of the agency's intervention services, as it is the point of contact for all support services. The support line is manned by trained clinical staff. Call 707-5398 between 4:30 pm and 8:30 am.
- ❖ **Bermuda Assessment & Referral Centre (BARC) –** Government-run program that offers substance use assessments to the community. Friends and family of individuals with substance use challenges may fill out a referral form and submit it to the BARC, after which assessments are administered. The individual is then referred to the appropriate treatment agency, which provides education, care and support to help individuals cope with and overcome their addiction. Call 292-5005 or email courtservices@gov.bm. To make an assessment referral for a loved one, please go to the following website: <https://www.gov.bm/online-services/make-substance-abuse-referral>



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