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# ADDICTION RECOVERY DURING HIGHER EDUCATION

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College students are using drugs and alcohol at a higher rate than young adults of the same age who don't attend school. [A recent study](#) from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health indicated that more than half of full-time college students ages 18-22 drank alcohol in the past month. [Another survey](#) performed by Monitoring the Future revealed that nearly 45% of college students have used an illicit drug.

It's clear that college students are under a lot of pressure from school and their peers, leading them to engage in risky behaviors like substance abuse. There's no denying the great benefit young adults stand to gain from attending schools of higher education, but it would be unwise to dismiss the use of alcohol and drugs as a normal part of the experience. Every year students struggle with academic performance and become injured or die as a result of substance abuse.

This guide will cover which substances pose the greatest risks to young adults, the potential consequences of being caught, and how to get better. If you're a student struggling with substance abuse, you can get help even while you attend school. Keep reading to learn about how you can overcome addiction and get the help you need.

# High-Risk Substances for College Students

Although substance abuse is risky for people of all ages, young adults are more vulnerable to the effects of certain substances. Most notably, the growth and development of a young person's physical body and mental health are drastically affected by drugs and alcohol, putting them at an even greater risk for disease and disorder. Not only do these substances take a toll on the body, but they also drain the bank accounts of people with addiction who

prioritize buying drugs over other necessities. Let's take a look at the most notable substances affecting teens and young adults and why they pose a particular threat.

## Alcohol

With [more than half of full-time college students](#) consuming alcohol, it's noted as the most popular substance of choice for young adults. That figure takes any amount of alcohol use into account, but it's important to know that at least 33% of students ages 18-22 admitted to binge drinking. Teens and young adults are at an especially greater risk for common issues like alcohol poisoning, withdrawal, drunk driving, drowning, and being drugged. However, [younger populations are specifically prone](#) to brain and liver damage, as well as growth and hormonal interruption.

## Adderall

Described as the "study drug," Adderall is a prescription stimulant used by people who have disorders such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to help them focus and have the energy to do daily tasks. Adderall is often prescribed to young people at the proper dosage for their symptoms, age, and body weight. [Teens and college students who use Adderall](#) without a prescription are putting themselves at risk for developing issues such as heart conditions, insomnia, anorexia, weight loss, and risky behavior. It's easy to

see why this substance would appeal to young adults, but the consequences can be dire, especially when taken with alcohol or other drugs.

# Opiates and Fentanyl

[According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services](#)

[Administration](#) (SAMHSA), the biggest misusers of prescription opioids are teens and young adults, with more than 2 million people ages 12-25 reporting misuse of prescription painkillers in 2018. One of the greatest risks for using opiates is how easy it is to overdose or unknowingly ingest fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is [100 times stronger than morphine](#). There are insidious dangers for young adults who choose to abuse opiates. Due to their brain's rapidly maturing reward center, adolescents are most vulnerable to the changes opiates make to the brain. Each time they take the drug, more and more will be required to reach the desired high, leading to a dangerous dependency or overdose.

# Ecstasy

MDMA, also known as ecstasy or molly, is another popular stimulant used by college students. Although this illegal drug has been downplayed among young adults as non-habit-forming, ecstasy has shown signs of being addictive and inducing withdrawal symptoms. The inherent dangers for college students lie in taking a large dose or a laced pill. [Consuming any amount](#) of this drug can lead to overheating, organ damage, brain damage,

and even death. Ecstasy is also often [laced with other substances](#) such as “bath salts,” ketamine, cocaine, and methamphetamine.

## Benzodiazepines

Known by names like BZDs or benzos, benzodiazepines are a class of drug commonly prescribed by doctors for anxiety, seizures, and insomnia. This is another case of prescription medication getting into the wrong hands.

Pursuing higher education as a young person often comes with anxiety and learning how to cope with stress. Benzodiazepines work to suppress these negative feelings, opening up the potential for developing a strong dependency. [According to Ascend Healthcare](#), “Teens who have prolonged use of BZDs can experience long-term effects, such as a higher risk of developing the onset of Alzheimer’s disease.” Outside these potential long-term consequences, attempting to quit this drug can be fatal.

## Diet Pills

Body image issues begin earlier than many would think, with nearly [one-third to half of high school students](#) reporting they’ve tried to lose weight. [According to the The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders](#) (ANAD), approximately 50% of teenage girls admit to using diet pills for weight loss. Appetite suppressants and metabolism stimulants are the drugs of choice for rapid results. These pills often contain large amounts of caffeine and unregulated herbal powders that can increase heart rate and

blood pressure, leading to heart conditions. When young adults use diet pills and decrease their intake of nutrients and important vitamins, their growth is stunted. Additionally, they become vulnerable to developing eating disorders.

## Marijuana

As one of the most popular substances among young adults, [marijuana is used by nearly half of college students](#). Although it's now legal for recreational use in many states, that doesn't mean it's harmless or beneficial for young adults pursuing higher education. Due to its relaxing nature, marijuana is a substance that impairs mind and body. College students using marijuana will experience memory and attention problems, difficulty thinking, reduced coordination, and increased hunger. These are all effects that lead to a decline in academic performance, physical health, and social life. As the brain continues to grow through a person's mid-20s, marijuana — like other substances — can negatively affect how the brain develops.

# Ramifications of Substance Abuse in Higher Education

Outside the numerous physical and mental impacts that substance abuse can have on college students, the risks don't stop at how it affects the body. There are academic, legal, and financial ramifications to be had if or when someone is caught. Students can lose access to their school or be stripped of financial aid. Any misconduct will likely be recorded on a permanent record, tarnishing the reputation of a student for years to come and affecting academic and employment opportunities. Here, we explore the potential consequences of abusing drugs and alcohol in higher education.

## Possible School-Related Repercussions

For students guilty of substance abuse by their school, consequences will vary depending on the campus and its policies. Most schools are lenient for first-time violations or less-serious incidents, usually involving alcohol use. For subsequent or illegal drug violations, the consequences can quickly become life-altering. Here are some examples of the types of academic repercussions students face when they violate these codes of conduct:

- Fines
- Official warning
- Educational module
- Parent/guardian notification
- Staff/coach notification
- Semester probation
- Substance abuse counseling
- Eviction from student housing
- Prohibition from school-related activities
- Criminal charges
- Expulsion

## Potential Legal Ramifications

As bad as academic consequences can be, having alcohol or drug charges on your permanent legal record is arguably worse. Students criminally charged with the possession, use, or distribution of illegal substances will also face denial of federal student aid funds, as stated within the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. Conviction related to drugs may also prohibit a student from:

- Participating in study-abroad programs
- Acquiring professional licensure and certification
- Being eligible for employment

When considering legal ramifications, it's important to note that in states where it's still illegal, possession of marijuana alone can range from a first-offense fine of \$600 and 30 days in jail to a second-offense fine of \$1,000 and one year in jail. For possession with intent to distribute, the penalties only get worse. Offenders will face fines of \$5,000 to \$10,000 and prison sentences of five to 10 years.

## **Possible Financial Consequences**

As mentioned above, students who violate the drug and alcohol codes of conduct upheld by their schools will face serious consequences. Some colleges even charge fines to students who commit one or more violations. Students convicted of drug-related offenses will likely lose their eligibility to receive federal financial aid toward school. If eligibility is lost, the student is liable to return any funds they received during their period of ineligibility. For those who do lose financial aid, it may eventually be restored through reversing convictions and passing unannounced drug tests.

# Flexible Treatment Options for Students

Students who want to make a change and get help with substance abuse don't have to wait for suspension or summer break; they can attend rehab during the school year. When most people hear the word "rehab," they often think of year-long intensive retreats far from their day-to-day lives. These inpatient treatment facilities are just one way for people to get help on the road to recovery. There are other more flexible options for people with busy lives, especially college students. Below we'll go over a few different outpatient programs that offer flexibility and support without having to leave school or work.

## Outpatient Programs (OP)

One option young adults have is a standard outpatient program. These are less-restrictive programs that require a few hours of treatment per week. Attendees can stay in their own homes or dorms while they work through the program and minimize any disruption to their daily lives. Because there's no need to pay for room and board as an outpatient, these programs are often more affordable.

The focus of outpatient treatment centers is to provide education on substance abuse and empower individuals with healthy ways of coping. There's also a focus on group and individual counseling to build a support system of people who have been through similar struggles, creating an opportunity to share wisdom and make friends. These programs can last anywhere from three months to a year.

## **Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOP)**

Another option for students who want more time in treatment without committing to an inpatient facility is an intensive outpatient program. This option is for individuals who can function at home but desire more care than a standard outpatient program. An IOP is like a stepping stone from inpatient to outpatient.

Anyone coming out of an inpatient program will greatly benefit from choosing an IOP before switching to an OP. The likelihood of success is increased when care is taken to transition slowly from constant supervision to living independently. The intensive element of these programs allows attendees to undergo more hours of treatment while still maintaining the flexibility of living at home and attending school.

# Evening Intensive Outpatient Programs

The only real difference between the above-mentioned programs and an evening intensive outpatient program is the time of day treatment and therapy sessions take place. While still considered an intensive option, evening programs provide an option for people whose schedules are only open at night. This is especially convenient for college students who are attending class and/or work during the day.

# Tips for Balancing School with Rehab and Recovery

Sometimes it's hard to do, but it's important to make sure you have everything you need to lead a healthy life as a student in rehab. Creating a good balance between school and recovery all starts with taking care of yourself and knowing you're not alone. Below we'll cover a few ways you can give yourself every opportunity to succeed.

# 1. Learn how to manage your stress in a healthy way.

Most college students are dealing with new levels of anxiety and stress brought on by the workload of classes and extracurriculars. It's easy to see why young adults justify using alcohol and drugs to help them relax or take the edge off the pressures of higher education. There are better, more sustainable ways to deal with academic overwhelm, however. Here are some examples of stress prevention and healthy coping mechanisms:

- Sign up for a manageable class load.
- Set aside enough study time.
- Talk to your professor right away if you fall behind.
- Make time for safe social activities on campus.
- Prioritize regular exercise to improve mood and stay healthy.
- Try meditating regularly to unwind and check in with yourself.
- Get plenty of sleep.

## 2. Room with someone sober.

Many colleges give students the option of requesting a roommate who is either sober or also in recovery. If you can room with someone on the same page as you about sober living, it's going to make daily life less stressful.

Having a roommate who parties and keeps alcohol in shared areas might be too tempting or create an environment unsuitable for someone going through recovery. Surround yourself with the kind of people who will help you, not hinder your progress.

### **3. Get involved on campus.**

If you're balancing your schoolwork well and find yourself wondering what to do with your free time, consider taking up a sport or hobby. Join a club that focuses on one of your interests or become part of the school newspaper. Not only will this solve the problem of boredom, but being an active member of the school opens opportunities for friendship and a chance to make lifelong memories.

### **4. Establish and maintain healthy boundaries.**

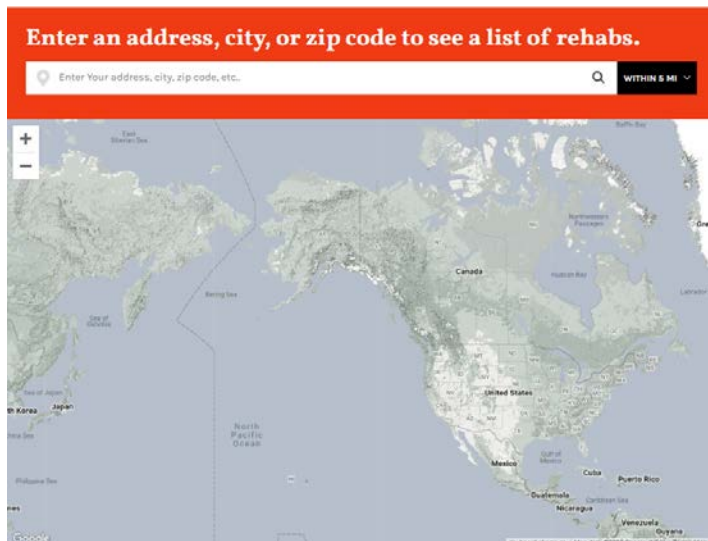
As a young adult in higher education, you want to fit in with your fellow students and make friends, but peer pressure can get the best of anyone and lead down a slippery slope. Establishing boundaries beforehand will prepare you for the inevitable awkward situation. Accept that it's OK to say no. Remember, if you constantly find yourself in environments where people who know you're in recovery still push your boundaries, it's time to find a new crowd.

## 5. Seek out safe social spaces.

As fun as it is to go to a party, it's best to avoid gatherings where drugs and alcohol will be present. There are plenty of other ways to pass time and have fun with friends outside the classroom. For example, many campuses have collegiate recovery programs that put on regular social events for students in recovery. As a two-for-one, join a study group for one of your classes and make studying a little more fun.

## Look for a Collegiate Recovery Program Near You

Campuses across the country are taking recovery for college students seriously. With a focus on supporting students in higher education, collegiate recovery programs are school-specific and often located on campus



# Recovery Programs and Resources for Students and Caregivers

If students and families need help with substance abuse outside a collegiate recovery program (or lack thereof), there are plenty of other options and resources available. Not only do recovery centers and organization websites provide help to those struggling with addiction, but they also supply family members the necessary support and education through online resources. Let's take a look at student-specific programs and general help provided by different agencies across the nation.

## The Recovery Village

With 10 locations across the country, The Recovery Village is an organization dedicated to helping individuals struggling with drug and alcohol addiction.

Their facilities provide services ranging from inpatient medical detox to outpatient programs and aftercare planning. All ages are welcome at The Recovery Village treatment centers, including adolescents. [Visit The Recovery Village website](#) for more information on where to find a rehab center near you.

## **SMART Recovery**

Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART) claims to take a fresh approach to recovery. The organization focuses on empowering its clients to overcome addiction issues to transform their lives. With more than 25 years of experience, SMART is a science-based method of recovery that involves participants in the creation and implementation of their own recovery plan. SMART offers recovery meetings across the globe. Use [the online SMARTfinder](#) to find both online and in-person meetings near you.

## **Alcoholics Anonymous**

A.A.'s main goal is to "help alcoholics to achieve sobriety." As one of the most well-known addiction programs, A.A. is free and open to people of all ages. For students struggling with alcohol addiction, A.A. provides a safe place for young adults to talk about their drinking problem and learn how to solve it. With chapters in every state, students interested in attending a meeting can use the organization's [online meeting finder](#). Learn more at [aa.org](#).

## **Narcotics Anonymous**

As an offshoot of A.A., N.A. is a place for individuals struggling with drug addiction. The organization brings people together to share their experiences

and talk about how addiction affects their lives. Similar to A.A., N.A. is free and open to all people no matter their age. N.A. exists to help addicts solve their addiction problems. Students can find local meetings using the “[find a meeting](#)” feature on [N.A.’s website](#).

## **The Haven at College**

The Haven at College works to provide services around prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery of mental health and substance misuse. The organization is working with three colleges (USC, Tufts, and UMBC) to provide on-campus and online support with a focus on education. Students have access to educational resources, mentoring, monitoring, outpatient services, counseling, and case management. Visit the website to [learn more](#), or email The Haven at College at [info@thehavenatcollege.com](mailto:info@thehavenatcollege.com).

## **Campus Drug Prevention**

This [government-run website](#) is a great place to find resources and educational content specifically for college students. There are fact sheets on the different affects of drugs and alcohol and [a student center](#) for information on how to help college students struggling with addiction. As part of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), this organization is “committed to promoting the importance of prevention and its role in helping ensure the health and safety of our nation’s colleges and universities.”

## **SAMHSA Facility Locator Map**

To find recovery programs near you, SAMHSA has created an interactive map for people looking for help. Simply enter your location and choose a service. The map will populate results in your desired area, providing links to websites and contact information. Visit [the SAMHSA website](#) today to find a variety of recovery services near you, or email the organization at [SAMHSAInfo@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:SAMHSAInfo@samhsa.hhs.gov) for more information.

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