

# Helping Youth Live an Active, Healthy & Drug-Free Lifestyle



Prevention  
**Plus**  
Wellness

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# Session Objectives

1. Identify the physical and mental health risks associated with youth substance use.
2. Explore the physical and mental health risks associated with other youth health behaviors.
3. Examine the mental, physical and social benefits of the Big 3 + 1 healthy lifestyle behaviors.
4. Review healthy behavior guidelines and 4 steps for achieving a more active, healthy and drug-free wellness lifestyle.



# What Health Risks Do Youth Face?

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# Substance Use Risks

# Alcohol Causes Youth Problems

- 1. Causes many deaths.** From motor vehicle crashes, homicides, alcohol overdoses, falls, burns, drowning, and suicides. (Approx. 4,000-5,000/yr)
- 2. Causes many injuries.** About 188,000 people younger than age 21 visited an emergency room for alcohol-related injuries.
- 3. Impairs judgment.** Poor decisions about taking risks, including unsafe sexual behavior, drinking and driving, and aggressive or violent behavior.
- 4. Increases the risk of physical and sexual assault.** Underage binge drinking is associated with an increased likelihood of being the victim or perpetrator of interpersonal violence.

# Alcohol Causes Youth Problems

5. **Can lead to other problems.** Trouble in school or with the law. Drinking alcohol also is associated with the use of other substances.
6. **Increases the risk of alcohol problems later in life.** Drinking before the age of 15 are at a higher risk for developing alcohol use disorder (AUD) later in life.
7. **Interferes with brain development.** Potentially affecting both brain structure and function. This may cause cognitive or learning problems as well as may increase vulnerability for AUD.

<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/underage-drinking>

# Binge Drinking Increases All Risks

1. Binge drinking for adults is 4 or more drinks for a woman and 5 or more for a man within 2 hours.
2. Binge drinking for youth is 3-5 alcohol drinks within 2 hours.
3. Binge drinking greatly increases risk for all negative consequences.

<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/underage-drinking>

# Marijuana Causes Youth Problems

## 1. Increased risk of mental health issues.

- Depression and social anxiety.
- Temporary psychosis (not knowing what is real, hallucinations, and paranoia) and **long-lasting mental disorders**, including schizophrenia (a type of mental illness where people might see or hear things that aren't there).
- The association between marijuana and schizophrenia is stronger in people who start using marijuana at an **earlier age and use marijuana more frequently**.

## 2. Impaired driving.

- Harms reaction time, coordination, and concentration.



# Marijuana Causes Youth Problems

## 3. Potential for addiction.

- Approximately 3 in 10 people who use marijuana have marijuana use disorder.
- Signs include trying but failing to quit using marijuana or giving up important activities with friends and family in favor of using marijuana.
- Risk stronger in people who **start using marijuana during youth or adolescence and who use marijuana more frequently.**

<https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/teens.html#:~:text=Increased%20risk%20of%20mental%20health%20issues.&text=People%20who%20use%20marijuana%20are,that%20aren't%20there>

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# Marijuana and the Brain

1. Difficulty thinking and problem-solving
2. Problems with memory and learning
3. Reduced coordination
4. Difficulty maintaining attention
5. Problems with school and social life

[https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/teens.html#:~:text=Increased%20risk%20of%200mental%20health%20issues.&text=People%20who%20use%20marijuana%20are,that%20aren't%20there\)](https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/teens.html#:~:text=Increased%20risk%20of%200mental%20health%20issues.&text=People%20who%20use%20marijuana%20are,that%20aren't%20there)

# E-Cigarette Effects on Youth

1. E-cigarettes contain chemicals that can cause irreversible lung damage and alter teen brains.
2. E-cigarettes contain harmful chemicals such as formaldehyde, which is known to cause cancer, and acrolein which is used as a weed killer and can cause irreversible lung damage.
3. Nicotine is highly addictive and exposure during adolescence can harm the developing brain.
4. Youth who use e-cigarettes are more likely to go on to use traditional cigarettes.
5. In the short term, e-cigarette aerosol can irritate your lungs, throat and eyes. It can also make it more likely that you'll catch colds or get the flu.

<https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/what-teens-should-know>

# Why is Nicotine Unsafe?

1. Most e-cigarettes (vapes) contain nicotine—the addictive drug in regular cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products.
2. Using nicotine can harm the parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood, and impulse control.
3. Using nicotine in adolescence may also increase risk for future addiction to other drugs.

[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html)

# Opioid Effects for Youth

## **1. OPIOIDS AFFECT YOUR BRAIN.**

- Opioids include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription.
- They affect both the spinal cord and brain to reduce the intensity of pain-signal perception as well as brain areas that control emotion.

## **2. OPIOIDS AFFECT YOUR BODY.**

- Opioids slow down the actions of the body, such as breathing and heartbeat.
- Even a single dose of an opioid can cause severe respiratory depression (slowing or stopping of breathing), which can be fatal.
- Taking opioids with alcohol or sedatives increases this risk.

# Opioid Effects for Youth

## **3. OPIOIDS ARE ADDICTIVE.**

- Even though heroin is highly addictive, more people struggle with addiction to prescription pain relievers.
- Many young people who inject heroin report misuse of prescription opioids before starting to use heroin.

## **4. OPIOIDS CAN KILL YOU.**

- Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, with 46,000 of those deaths involved opioids.

<https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/pep19-08.pdf>

# Opioid Misuse in Youth

- drowsiness,
- constipation,
- nausea,
- dizziness,
- vomiting,
- dry mouth,
- headaches,
- sweating,
- mood changes,
- loss of appetite, and
- weakness.

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/opioids>

# Other Health Risks



1. Lead to energy imbalance and the risk of becoming overweight or obese.
2. Increase the risk of factors for cardiovascular disease, including hyperlipidemia, high blood pressure, obesity, and insulin resistance and glucose intolerance.
3. Increase the risk for developing type 2 diabetes.
4. Increase the risk for developing breast, colon, endometrial, and lung cancers.
5. Lead to low bone density, which in turn, leads to osteoporosis.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/facts.htm#:~:text=Increase%20the%20risk%20of%20factors,insulin%20resistance%20and%20glucose%20intolerance.&text=Increase%20the%20risk%20of%20developing%20type%202%20diabetes.>

# Physical Inactivity Effects on Youth



# Physical Inactivity and Youth Mental Health

1. Psychological distress
2. Depressive symptoms
3. Lower mental wellbeing
4. Lower life satisfaction
5. Less happiness

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8872491/#:~:text=Physical%20inactivity%20is%20inversely%20associated,happiness%20in%20youth%20%5B29%5D>

# Poor Eating Effects on Youth

- being overweight or obese
- tooth decay
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- heart disease and stroke
- type-2 diabetes
- osteoporosis
- some cancers
- depression
- eating disorders

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/healthy+living/is+your+health+at+risk/the+risks+of+poor+nutrition>



# Skipping Breakfast Effects on Youth

1. Linked to poor nutrition
2. Poor academic performance
3. More calories consumed
4. Regular breakfast is linked to regular physical activity

<https://medicalnewsbulletin.com/skipping-breakfast-affecting-kids/>

# Skipping Breakfast Effects on Youth Mental Health

1. Higher risk of stress
2. Depression
3. Psychological distress
4. Anxiety in adolescents

[https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnut.2022.871238/full#:~:text=In%20a%20meta%2Danalysis%20\(8,found%20similar%20findings%20\(9\).](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnut.2022.871238/full#:~:text=In%20a%20meta%2Danalysis%20(8,found%20similar%20findings%20(9).)

# Inadequate Sleep Effects on Youth

1. Thinking and Academic Achievement
2. Emotional Health
3. Physical Health and Development
4. Decision-Making and Risky Behavior
5. Accidents and Injuries

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/teens-and-sleep>

# Benefits of the Big Three + 1 Wellness Behaviors

# Benefits of Youth Sports & PA

(President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board, 2020)

[https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/YSS\\_Report\\_OnePager\\_2020-08-31\\_web.pdf](https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/YSS_Report_OnePager_2020-08-31_web.pdf)



# Mental, Emotional & Social Benefits

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- 1. Lower rates of anxiety and depression**
- 2. Lower amounts of stress**
- 3. Higher self-esteem and confidence**
- 4. Reduced risk of suicide**
- 5. Less substance abuse and fewer risky behaviors**
6. Increased cognitive performance
7. Increased creativity
8. Greater enjoyment of all forms of physical activity
9. Improved psychological and emotional well-being for individuals with disabilities
10. Increased life satisfaction

# Physical Health Benefits

1. Improved bone health
2. Improved weight status
3. Increased cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness
4. Reduced risk of cancer and diabetes
5. Increased physical activity levels
6. Improved cardiovascular fitness
7. Decreased body fat percentage for girls
8. **Increased overall quality of life**

# Education & Career Benefits

1. Improved teamwork, social skills, and social responsibility
2. **Improved life skills (e.g., goal setting, time management, work ethic, empathy, negotiation)**
3. **Increased empowerment, personal responsibility, and self-control**
4. Improved educational and occupational skills (e.g., determination, perseverance, grit, resilience, critical thinking)
5. Higher levels of academic achievement
6. Greater leadership qualities
7. High school athletes are more likely to attend and graduate from a four-year college

# Lifelong Participation Benefits

1. **Lifelong participation in sports can lead to improved mental health outcomes.**
2. Over 50% of adults who participate in sports believe that participation **reduces stress and improves mental health.**
3. **Adolescents who play sports are 8 times more likely to be physically active at age 24** than those who do not play sports.
4. Participating in sports leads to immediate psychological benefits, and these can continue even after retirement from sports.

# Economic Benefits

- A decrease in direct, indirect, and personal health care costs (collectively, up to \$28 billion per year)

- A stronger long-term labor market

# Benefits of Youth Healthy Eating

(CDC Healthy Schools)

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/nutrition/facts.htm>

(Academy of Nutrition &  
Dietetics, 2021)

<https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/healthy-eating/5-reasons-your-teen-needs-breakfast>



# Benefits of Healthy Eating

Healthy eating can help individuals achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, consume important nutrients, and reduce the risk of developing health conditions such as:

- High blood pressure.
- Heart disease.
- Type 2 diabetes.
- Cancer.
- Osteoporosis.
- Iron deficiency.
- Dental caries (cavities).

# Benefits of Eating Breakfast

1. **Energy: Along with sleep and exercise**, breakfast is one of the best ways to recharge your batteries.
2. **Improved Concentration:** Studies suggest that eating a nutritious breakfast **improves brain function — particularly memory and recall.**
3. **Better Grades:** Research shows students who eat breakfast perform better **academically.**
4. **Healthy Choices:** Those who eat a morning meal tend to **make healthier food choices throughout the day**, which can positively impact long-term health.
5. **It Tastes Great:** This may be the most compelling reason to enjoy breakfast before a long school day.



# Benefits of Youth Sleep

(Sleep Foundation, 2022)

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/teens-and-sleep>



# Benefits of Sleep

1. **Thinking and Academic Achievement:** Sleep benefits the **brain and promotes attention, memory, and analytical thought.**
2. **Emotional Health:** Most people have experienced how sleep can affect **mood, causing irritability and exaggerated emotional reactions.**
3. **Physical Health and Development:** Sleep contributes to the **effective function of virtually every system** of the body.
4. **Decision-Making and Risky Behavior:** Sleep deprivation can affect the development of the **frontal lobe**, a part of the brain that is critical to control impulsive behavior.
5. **Accidents and Injuries:** Insufficient sleep in teens can make them prone to accidental injury and even death.



# Benefits of Relaxation Practice

# Benefits of Practicing Relaxation Techniques

1. Slowing heart and breathing rates and lowering blood pressure
2. Improving digestion
3. Controlling blood sugar levels
4. Reducing activity of stress hormones
5. Increasing blood flow to major muscles
6. Reducing muscle tension and chronic pain
- 7. Improving focus and mood**
- 8. Improving sleep quality**
9. Lowering fatigue
- 10. Reducing anger and frustration**
- 11. Boosting confidence to handle problems**

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/relaxation-technique/art-20045368>

# Benefits of Meditation

1. Reduces stress
2. Controls anxiety
3. Promotes emotional health
4. Enhances self-awareness
5. Lengthens attention span
6. May reduce age-related memory loss
7. Can generate kindness
8. May help fight addictions
9. Improves sleep
10. Helps control pain
11. Can reduce blood pressure

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/12-benefits-of-meditation>

A close-up photograph of a basketball hoop and net. The orange metal rim is in the foreground, with the white netting hanging down. A basketball is visible in the upper left corner, slightly out of focus. The background is dark and blurred.

# Conclusion

Regular physical activity and sports participation, sleep, and healthy nutrition, along with relaxation practices have been linked to a wide-range of positive mental, physical and social outcomes for young people.

# Health Behavior Guidelines & Steps for Improving Wellness

# Youth Health Behavior Guidelines

- 1) 1-hour physical activity every day
- 2) 8-10 hours sleep each night
- 3) Healthy breakfast every day
- 4) 3 vegetable servings every day
- 5) 2 fruit servings every day
- 6) Avoid alcohol & drug use
- 7) Practice a daily relaxation technique

<https://preventionpluswellness.com/pages/healthy-lifestyle-guidelines-for-youth-and-young-adult-goal-setting>



The background features a complex financial chart with a candlestick pattern overlaid on a line graph. A dotted trend line curves across the chart. At the top, there are numerical values '0.6' and '1.65' with a downward-pointing triangle. Another upward-pointing triangle is visible on the right side. At the bottom, a bar chart with vertical bars of varying heights is visible. The overall color scheme is blue and white.

# 4 Steps for Living a More Active, Healthy & Drug-Free Life

# Step 1: Use a Screening Survey To Increase Health Behavior Reflection

1. Reflecting upon one's health behaviors is the **first step in changing personal habits.**
2. Assessing which substance use and healthy behaviors you are currently engaged in is essential for **increasing awareness of your health risks and strengths.**
3. **Thinking about specific steps you can take to improve each of your health behaviors** is a necessary first step in setting goals to improve your habits.
4. Using **screening surveys or asking questions** is a great way to enhance reflection on one's health behaviors.



# Screening Survey Questions

In the last 30 days, did you...

1. Get 60 minutes or more of physical activity every day (For example, walking, running, swimming, sports, chores)? **Yes or No**
2. Limit your non-school related screen time (TV, computer, smart phone, tablet, online games) to 2 or fewer hours every day? **Yes or No**
3. Eat breakfast every morning? **Yes or No**
4. Get 8 or more hours of sleep every night? **Yes or No**
5. Avoid using alcohol, marijuana and other drugs every day? **Yes or No**
6. Avoid using e-cigarettes and tobacco every day? **Yes or No**
7. Practice active relaxation every day to reduce stress (For example, do deep slow breathing, walk in nature, sit in a quiet place, meditate, pray, take a bath, play with a pet, do yoga, listen to quiet music)? **Yes or No**

# Youth Wellness Lifestyle Check-Up (WLC)

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- <https://preventionpluswellness.com/blogs/news/youth-wellness-lifestyle-check-up-wlc>





# Strategies

1. Which specific types of healthy habits would you like to increase?
2. What specific steps could you take to improve each of your healthy habits?
3. Which specific types of substance use would you like to avoid in the future?

## Step #2: Identify the Benefits Of Healthy Behaviors

1. Identifying the **benefits of engaging in each healthy behavior will increase positive expectancies** which in turn increases motivation to participate in those behaviors.
2. **Positive future images, as well as images of peers engaging in specific healthy habits are associated with one's personal identity** and are desirable outcomes that **hold particular motivational strength**.



# Strategies

1. Think about how you would look and feel in the future if you engaged in various individual healthy habits
2. Compare yourself now and a year from now if you participated more regularly in specific healthy behaviors

# Step #3: Identify How Substance Use Harms Healthy Habits & Benefits

- 1. Linking how specific substance use harms or interferes with achieving healthy behaviors is key to addressing multiple health risks within single programs.**
- 2. Identifying how substance use sabotages achieving the positive benefits and desired future images associated with participating in specific healthy habits is critical.**





# Strategies

1. Identify how specific substances, e.g., alcohol, cannabis, e-cigarettes, opioids, can interfere with achieving specific healthy behaviors and their benefits
2. List negative outcomes from using specific substances to health and healthy behaviors



## Step #4: Make A Multiple Health Behavior Plan

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1. Setting goals, particularly **short-term goals**, is essential to **initiating and achieving behavior change**, as well as developing **self-regulation skills and self-efficacy**.
2. Goals should be **specific**, that is **measurable**, as well as **achievable**.
3. **Multiple behavior goals** should be set to prevent substance use while increasing one or more healthy lifestyle behaviors.

# Strategies

1. Set weekly (7-day) goals to both avoid substance use and increase a healthy behavior
2. Sign and date and have someone else you trust co-sign the goal to make it a public commitment and increase motivation for change
3. Monitor and log your goal success every day for the next 7-days
4. Goals should at a minimum identify what (specific behavior to change), how much (quantity of change) and when (frequency)
5. Reward yourself for achieving any small goal success every week
6. The more you set, monitor and achieve short-term weekly goals the more you will increase your skills and confidence to live a wellness lifestyle

# Final Thoughts & Suggestions

1. Youth experience multiple health risks from substance use and other health behaviors, including physical inactivity, unhealthy eating and inadequate sleep.
2. There are mental, physical and social benefits of practicing the Big 3 + 1 healthy lifestyle behaviors, as well as avoiding substance use.
3. There are 4 easy steps youth should practice for achieving a more active, healthy and drug-free wellness lifestyle.

# For more information on PPW...

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