

Tips for Parents and Trusted Adults to Protect Kids

Novel Intoxicants Hiding in Plain Sight

Hemp-derived THC, kratom, "laughing gas," and intoxicating mushroom chocolate bars currently sit on convenience store shelves beside soda and the snacks, in bright, kid-appealing packaging. They're sold with little to no age verification, stringent product testing, or verified safety labeling. Your child can likely **buy them within a few miles of home or even online**.

The good news: you are still the single biggest influence on whether they choose to use these substances. **Youth who know their parents disapprove of substance use are less likely to use.**

Why are these products different?

These aren't the drugs from decades ago. They are **engineered in labs** and marketed as wellness items. Potency varies wildly from package to package; warnings are inconsistent, absent, or unverified; and many products are designed to mimic popular snack foods. Meanwhile, the adolescent brain keeps developing into the mid-twenties and beyond building the systems that govern judgment, memory, and self-control. This makes youth **uniquely vulnerable** to harms from these products.

How can you protect teens you know? Start with **calm, respectful conversations grounded in facts** that begin even before they encounter substances.

Where do kids and teens find them?

Gas stations

Convenience Stores

Smoke and vape shops

Online

Farmer's markets and pop-ups

Intoxicating Hemp

Chemically synthesized from hemp. It carries the same risks to a teen's brain as any other THC product.

Sold as: gummies, vapes, seltzers and sodas, smokable "flower," concentrates

Risks: dependence, anxiety, depression, psychosis, uncontrollable vomiting

Number to know: 82% of unintentional exposures reported to the FDA involved kids. More than half needed medical care.



Kratom & 7-OH

Marketed as a "natural" boost for energy, focus, or pain. 7-OH is a lab-made concentrate with roughly 13 times the potency of morphine.

Sold as: capsules, powders, "energy" shots, gummies, flavored drink sticks, sodas

Risks: dependence and withdrawal, seizures, liver injury, insomnia and anxiety, fatal respiratory depression

Number to know: Poison center reports have surged more than 1,200% over the past decade.



Nitrous Oxide

The same gas used at the dentist, sold in flavored canisters and small "whippets." In 2025 the FDA warned consumers not to inhale it recreationally.

Sold as: flavored "culinary" whipped cream chargers, small metal whippets, brightly branded tanks

Risks: loss of consciousness, nerve and spinal cord damage, paralysis, blood clots, B12 deficiency, hallucinations, depression, death

Number to know: U.S. deaths from nitrous oxide poisoning rose nearly 600% between 2010 and 2023.



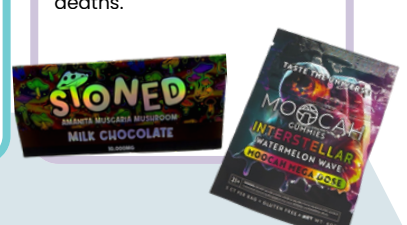
Psychoactive Mushrooms

Amanita muscaria (a red-capped, white-spotted mushroom) isn't federally illegal, and producers use psychedelic imagery to market it in candy form. The FDA says it doesn't meet the safety standard for use in food.

Sold as: chocolate bars, gummies, cones

Risks: confusion and delirium, altered perception, nausea and vomiting, seizures, acute psychosis

Number to know: One 2024 product line was linked to 180 illnesses, 73 hospitalizations, and 2 deaths.



Starting the Conversation

You don't need to be an expert to talk with the kids in your life. You just need to be curious, calm, and willing to listen. Try to understand their point of view and concerns. A teen who feels heard keeps communication open. Explore the facts together.

BASIC TALKING POINTS

Legal or "natural" doesn't mean safe. These products are on the shelf because regulation hasn't caught up. Many doctors and scientists are very concerned about their risks.

Wellness claims are just marketing. Energy, focus, sleep, calm, pain relief, and more— the claims on these packages haven't been evaluated by the FDA, and marketing doesn't tell the full story. The tobacco industry used the same playbook: candy flavors, bright colors, health claims.

Potency and process are what make the difference. These are lab-made concentrates, not plants. A single serving can be many times stronger than expected, and two packages of the same product may not contain the same dose.

The teen brain is under construction. The brain keeps developing into the mid-twenties and beyond. High-potency substances can sabotage the brain, which raises the risk of dependence, memory and learning problems, anxiety, depression, and psychosis into the future. Some of the harms may last a very long time and could be permanent.

Family history matters. If mental health conditions or addiction run in your family, say so plainly. It changes your child's personal susceptibility risk to psychoactive products, and most teens have never been told.

None of this mixes with driving. Impaired is impaired, no matter the substance. Agree in advance that they can always call you for a ride without consequences for making the smart and safe choice.

End the conversation by making your expectations known: you expect them to stay away from these products, but you're always available to talk. Then keep the conversations going. One talk is a start but ongoing dialogue is what protects your kids.



Visit stopgasstationdrugs.org for more resources

