DEBUNKING PRESCRIPTION STIMULANT MYTHS

STUDY DRUGS: FACT V. FICTION
WHAT ARE STUDY DRUGS?

- prescription stimulants
- ADHD medications
  - Adderall, aka “Addy”
    - amphetamine
  - Ritalin, aka “Rids” or “Vitamin R”
    - methylphenidate
HOW DO PRESCRIPTION STIMULANTS WORK?

- Stimulants affect the central nervous system, making it produce excess natural brain chemicals (neurotransmitters)
- This causes changes to a person’s mood, alertness and other motor activity
- **Prescription stimulants have the same effect on all people**, regardless of the person’s neurotransmitter levels
  - Kids with ADHD have low neurotransmitter levels. Stimulants bring these levels up to a normal level.
  - Kids who don’t have ADHD have normal neurotransmitter levels. Stimulants bring these levels above where they should be.
WHO USES STUDY DRUGS?

- Kids who have ADHD and a valid medical prescription for the stimulants.
- Students who don’t have ADHD but heard the drugs help them perform better in school.
- Middle school, high school and college students all have been found to use the drugs non-medically.
STUDY DRUG SYMPTOMS

- For kids with ADHD
  - ADHD makes kids highly distractible. Symptoms* include struggling to:
    - Sit still
    - Listen
    - Focus

- For kids without ADHD
  - The “good” symptoms kids want:
    - Insomnia
    - Loss of appetite
    - Increased focus
  - Other common symptoms include:
    - Increased blood pressure & heart rate
    - Tics
    - Dizziness
    - Stomach pain

* After using stimulants, these symptoms are lessened or disappear.
MYTH 1: STUDY DRUGS MAKE ME DO BETTER IN SCHOOL

Middle and high school students
Students think this is true because of the symptoms they experience.

- Insomnia (staying up all night to study or write a paper)
- Intense ability to focus ("Wow, I’m getting so much done!")
- Loss of appetite (uninhibited focus)

**However, facts don’t mirror these feelings.** Scientifically, there’s no evidence supporting this.

- One 2013 research study found kids who take study drugs non-medically (not to treat ADHD):
  - Skipped twice as many classes
  - **Had lower grades**
  - Partied more than students who don’t take the drugs
MYTH 2: STUDY DRUGS ARE SAFE

Middle and high school students (and often parents)
Stimulants cause many serious side effects, especially when taken in high doses, including:

- Violent behavior
- Hallucinations
- Psychosis
- Epilepsy
- Sudden death

Doctors are aware of these side effects, but temper them by warning patients and adjusting dosage size. The problem is, **non-medical users don’t get this warning** from doctors because they don’t have a prescription.
In addition, stimulants can be deadly for people with certain conditions, like:

- High anxiety
- Hyperthyroidism
- Heart disease
- Heart defects
- High blood pressure
And, stimulants can be addictive.

Experts often call them “gateway drugs.”

After using the drugs, the body builds up a tolerance for it. If a student wants the same effect they once had, they have to consume more of it.

Eventually study drugs won’t give them the high they’re looking for, and they’ll turn to illicit drugs.

The next step up for many stimulant users is cocaine or heroin.
MYTH 3:
STUDY DRUGS ARE A COLLEGE THING
This is a common misconception. While most scientific studies do examine college students, there is plenty of data to prove high school and middle school students are using these drugs.

In 2015, 10% of high school sophomores and 12% of seniors said they had used study drugs non-medically at some point.

In the first-ever survey of middle school study drug use, one in every 15 students in 6th - 8th grade said they had used the drugs non-medically.

Shocked?

Only 1% of parents believe their teens have used study drugs, according to a Mott Children’s Hospital study.
Read our comprehensive guide on study drugs, featuring exclusive interviews with industry experts.

www.teenrehabcenter.org/resources/study-drugs-epidemic/