**Suggested Newsletter Inserts for Secondary Schools**

**Substance Use, Addictions and Related Behaviours - Drugs and Alcohol**

**Misusing pain medication is very dangerous.**

Pain medication (opioids) like Tylenol No. 3®, Percocet, morphine and fentanyl can be misused in two ways:

1. If used in ways other than intended by a physician
2. If used by someone it was not prescribed for.

One in 10 students in Grades 7–12 report misusing pain medication, and the majority of them got the drug from someone’s home.

**What can you do?**

* Keep your medications locked up and out of sight
* Clean out your medicine cabinet regularly and take left over or expired medication to the pharmacy for safe, free disposal.

For more information, visit the health unit’s website at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org) or call *Health Connection* at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

**Parents Have Influence**

Did you know that teenagers rank their parents as having the most influence over what risks they choose to take? And that teens who believe their parents strongly disapprove of drug and alcohol use are less likely than their peers to use them! So…

* Spend time with your kids and talk openly about alcohol and other drugs
* Set clear and consistent messages
* Know that you are their role-model.

For useful tips and other helpful information on how you can best communicate with your teen and how you can help your teen manage the risks he/she face in his/her daily life, visit <http://www.smartrisknoregrets.ca/index/parent.html> as well as the parenting section at <http://simcoemuskokahealth.org>.

**Alcohol Poisoning**

Alcohol poisoning can be life threatening. We recommend talking to your teen about alcohol and ways to stay safe, before they are ever in a situation where they or their friends could tempted to experiment with drinking. Teach them how to recognize signs of alcohol poisoning, such as: vomiting, passing out/losing consciousness and difficulty waking. Help them understand what to do if a friend has had too much to drink:

* Call 911 and stay with the person until help arrives; keep them safe.
* Don’t let the person drink any more alcohol.
* If the person is unconscious, place them on their side.
* If breathing stops, begin rescue breathing. If no pulse, begin CPR.

For more information you can call Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-5720 and speak with a public health nurse or click on the health unit website at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/).

**The Teenage Brain**

Did you know that the teen brain is still developing until about the age of 25? And the part of the brain that powers a teen’s ability to think, plan, solve problems, make decisions and control emotions is one of the last parts to mature. This may help explain certain teenage behaviour such as poor decision-making, recklessness and emotional outbursts.

Because their brains are still developing, young people are at greater risk from the harmful effects of alcohol, cannabis and other drugs.

So stay connected, keep talking with your teen and be a good role model.

For more information, visit the health unit’s website at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org) or call *Health Connection* at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

**Teens still need their parents**

We know it can be tough for parents to know how to provide support and guidance to their teenagers, while also helping them to gain their independence. Here are a few tips that we hope you’ll find helpful:

1. Continue to set clear expectations, boundaries and rules to help your teen deal with new situations and challenges.
2. Stay connected and show interest in what they are doing and who their friends are.
3. Let them know you believe in them and encourage them to problem solve by letting them succeed and make mistakes on their own.
4. Be a positive role model. Teens get mixed messages when what we say is not reinforced by what we do. Consider what your habits, attitudes and behaviours are saying to your teen.

And most of all…let them know you love them!

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**Cannabis**

We know that cannabis is considered easy to get but did you know that, most teens have never tried cannabis?

Cannabis can harm the developing brain of teens who use cannabis at a younger age, regularly and often. It is important to start talking with your kids at an early age about cannabis and continue to talk about cannabis in adolescence and young adulthood.

Tips for talking with your teen about cannabis:

* Be prepared; learn about cannabis and why teens use it
* Know that your own feelings, beliefs and concerns about cannabis can impact the way you talk about it
* Be respectful and non-judgmental
* Be open to hearing about your teen’s experiences or the experiences of their friends
* Talk about problems that may come from cannabis use
* Talk about other ways to manage stress and to relax.

For more information, visit the health unit’s website at

[www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org) or call *Health Connection* at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

**Cannabis Impairs Your Abilities**

Cannabis impaired driving may double the risk of being involved in a crash. This risk for serious collisions increases even more when cannabis is mixed with alcohol. Cannabis impairs a person's thinking, coordination, ability to judge distance and their reaction time and decision-making abilities are slowed down. This can last 12 hours or longer after using cannabis.

Many teens think it is safe to drive within a few hours of using cannabis. Teens may be a passenger of a driver using cannabis. Help keep your teen safer by:

* Talking about the problem of cannabis impaired driving
* Offering to be a safe ride
* Being a good example by not driving after using cannabis.