

Dangerous Liaisons

By Brittney Stuart

It's hard enough to stay healthy in college.

New-found liberties are mixed with a new academic environment. At the same time, freshmen are introduced to stress— in a way most have never experienced before.

Such a setting opens up the search for an escape route. Surveys indicate that alcohol is the most popular drug on college campuses. Though drinking is often seen as an “acceptable” behavior, many who turn to alcohol often become trapped in its façade.

A recent study found that the part of the brain that processes smell is damaged in a period of two days of heavy drinking; other parts are harmed after four days. One long weekend of heavy partying can leave your brain damaged for life.

In addition to the headaches and nausea that hangovers bring on, there's also the far more serious effect of alcohol poisoning, which often leads to death. Unfortunately, many partiers who start off the evening planning to have a little fun end up at the hospital – or worse, at the morgue. Is it really worth it? 🏠



The Club You Don't Want to Join

The “club drug” Ecstasy has been making huge appearances on college campuses in recent years. Ecstasy users rave about the drug's ability to alleviate social tension and ease communication. However, the high from a \$20 to \$40 Ecstasy pill lasts only four to six hours, so users keep increasing the amount in order to maintain the experience.

When the high wears off – and it does – Ecstasy can bring a stretch of depression lasting anywhere from one day to a few weeks. Medical professionals are also finding that Ecstasy mars the memory and can permanently diminish the brain chemical serotonin.

Other dangerous club drugs cropping up at raves around the country include ones with nicknames such as “Roofie,” “Adam,” “Georgia Home Boy,” and “Chalk.”

The fact that some drugs are odorless and tasteless makes them even more dangerous, since they can easily be slipped into a drink without you even knowing it. (WARNING: NEVER leave drink unattended at a party.) The effects of these drugs can result in anything from hallucinations and paranoia to death.

Some college students have been turning to the so called “study drugs” with a desire to enhance their test-taking ability. For those with ADD, prescription Ritalin, Adderal, or Dexedrine can work wonders by maintaining the patient's focus. For those without the diagnosis, the stimulants may actually increase hyperactivity and anxiety and adversely affect appetite, mood and sleep.

Part of becoming an adult is gaining more freedom – and responsibility. Take the responsibility seriously and steer clear of the things that will keep you from achieving your goals. 🏠

Cool Goes up in Smoke

Maybe you feel more confident with a cigarette in your hand. Maybe you think it just looks cool. But the cold reality is that smoking is known to cause lung cancer and emphysema – a condition where you essentially smother to death. Short-term, you're more susceptible to colds and bronchitis.

Studies have also proven that the nicotine in cigarettes is no less addictive than heroin. The nicotine in tobacco plants is actually a poison, utilized to ward off leaf-eating insects. In pure form, one drop of nicotine on the tongue can prove lethal in less than an hour.

Those who use smokeless tobacco are no less likely to become addicted. Even short-term use of spitting tobacco can cause cracked lips, white spots, sores and bleeding in the mouth. Plus, the surgery required to remove oral cancer – which has been seen in teens – can result in dramatic changes to your facial appearance.

Still not convinced? Think about the day-to-day realities:

- Smoking reduces the oxygen available for muscles during sports, affecting both speed and overall athletic performance.
- In addition to making your hair and clothes stink, tobacco stains your teeth and leaves you with a nasty case of bad breath. (Not too helpful in the romance department!)
- The money you spend on tobacco can add up to some serious bucks. Kick the habit and reward yourself with some new clothes, CDs or video games.

