

Interconnections of Risk Behaviors

There is a growing body of research showing that the five major behavior risks facing youth – alcohol, drugs, sex, tobacco, and violence – are inextricably linked.

When researchers from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (also known as Add Health) surveyed more than 90,000 teenagers, they found that when children feel loved and cared for by their parents, they are less likely to engage in risk behaviors.

Research findings include:

Youth ages 12-17 who smoke are eight times more likely to use illicit drugs and 11 times more likely to drink heavily than nonsmoking youths;

- 87% of 14-15 year olds who are regular users of marijuana have had sexual intercourse;
- Seventh grad boys who smoke marijuana are about six times more likely to assault someone with a weapon than those who do not use marijuana; and
- Tobacco use in adolescence is associated with a range of health-compromising behaviors, including being involved in fights, carrying weapons, engaging in higher-risk sexual behavior, and using alcohol and other drugs.

For more information on interconnectedness of risk behaviors visit the following web sites:

- Institute of Youth Development
www.youthdevelopment.org
- National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (Add Health)
www.cdc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth