

Drug, alcohol abuse more likely among high school dropouts

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U.S. report also confirms that kids who fail to complete school are more apt to take up cigarettes.

(HealthDay News) —The link between poor academic performance and substance abuse just got stronger, with a new U.S. government report showing ties between the two.

High school seniors who dropped out of school before graduating were more likely to drink, smoke cigarettes and use marijuana and other [illegal drugs](#), according to a new report from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The researchers said their findings should prompt communities to develop strategies to keep teens in school and prevent problems with substance abuse.

"The fact that nearly one in seven students drops out of high school has

enormous public health implications for our nation," SAMHSA Administrator Pamela Hyde said in an agency news release. "Dropouts are at increased risk of substance abuse, which is particularly troubling given that they are also at greater risk of poverty, not having health insurance, and other health problems. We have to do everything we can to keep youth in school so they can go on to lead healthy, productive lives, free from substance abuse."

The study revealed [high school seniors](#) (typically between 16 and 18 years of age) who dropped out of school were more than twice as likely to be [smokers](#), or have smoked in the past month, than students who stayed in school. The study also found that more than 31 percent of seniors who didn't receive their diploma used drugs, compared with about 18 percent of students who had finished high school.

The researchers also noted that about 27 percent of high school dropouts smoked marijuana, while close to one in every 10 abused prescription drugs. Meanwhile, only about 15 percent of those who completed high school used [marijuana](#) and just 5 percent abused prescription drugs.

Dropouts were also more likely to drink—the study showed that nearly 42 percent of seniors who didn't finish high school drank and about a third engaged in [binge drinking](#).

In contrast, about 35 percent of those students who stayed in school drank and only about one-quarter said they binged on alcohol.

More information: The U.S. National Institutes of Health provides more information on [drug abuse](#).

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