

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
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Section I—Common Health Problems



Abdominal Pain	6
Acne	10
Allergies & Asthma	12
Colds & Flu (Includes SARS)	15
Coughs	18
Depression	20
Diarrhea	23
Eating Disorders	26
Fatigue (Includes Mononucleosis)	30
Fever	33
Headaches	35
Skin Injuries	38
Sore Throats	43
Sprains, Strains & Sports Injuries	44
STDs/HIV	48
Stress	53
Suicidal Thoughts	56
Urinary Tract Infections	59
Vaginal Problems	61
Vomiting & Nausea	64
West Nile Virus	66

Section II—Playing It Safe



General Safety Guidelines	67
Alcohol & Alcohol Safety	68
Drugs & Drug Safety	70
Over-the-Counter Medication Safety	73
Skin Safety	78
Tests & Immunizations	80
Testicular Self-Exam (TSE)	82
Breast Self-Exam (BSE)	83

Section III—Lifestyle Issues



Eat Well & Get Regular Exercise	84
Set Up Good Sleep Habits	87
Don't Use Tobacco Products	88
Sexual Health	91

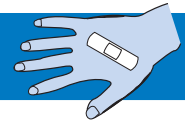
Introduction

You are at a time in your life when you need to make a lot of decisions: Decisions on career choices, future plans and goals, etc. You need to make decisions to take care of your health, too. Knowing what to do can be confusing. You may not have had many health problems in the past, and when you did, your parents probably took care of you. You need to fend for yourself now. This guide can help. It contains 3 sections. The first one addresses 21 common health problems. The second section covers issues that deal with keeping you safe while keeping you healthy. The third section presents information on lifestyle issues. Like a roommate or a friend, this self-care guide can come to your aid when you need it. It may even save your life!

Section I – Common Health Problems

How to Use This Section

- Find the health problem in Section I of the Table of Contents and go to that page. The problems are listed in order from A to Z.
- Read about the problem, what causes it (if known), its symptoms, and treatments.
- Scrutinize the “Questions to Ask.” Start at the top of the flow chart and answer YES or NO to each question.

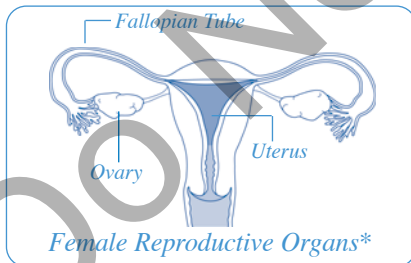
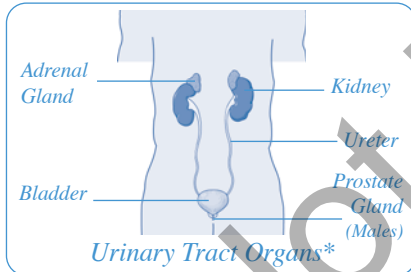
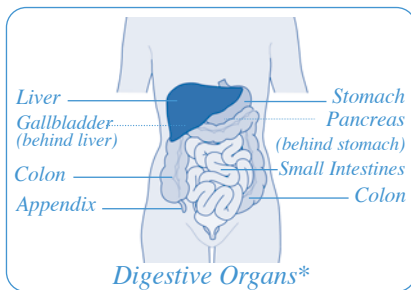


Abdominal Pain

“When I got to school, my stomach did a lot of backflips because of all of the new foods. I miss my mom’s cooking.”

John L., Notre Dame University

The abdomen is the body region between the lower ribs and the pelvis that contains many vital organs:



Abdominal pain can range from mild to severe: be dull or sharp; acute or chronic. Acute pain is sudden pain. Chronic pain can be constant or pain that recurs over time. The type of pain, its location, and other symptoms that come with it help suggest the cause.

Signs, Symptoms & Causes

There are many causes of abdominal pain. Common ones in students and the symptoms that accompany them are listed below.

Constipation

Constipation results from not drinking enough fluids, not eating enough dietary fiber, not being active enough, and from misusing laxatives. Symptoms of constipation are:

- A hard time passing stool, not being able to pass stool, and/or having very hard stools
- Straining to have a bowel movement
- Abdominal swelling or feeling of continued fullness after passing stool

Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis is inflammation of the lining of the stomach and intestines. Causes include having an intestinal virus, food poisoning, and drinking contaminated water or too much alcohol. Symptoms of gastroenteritis include:

- Abdominal pain or cramping
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever and/or chills

It may be hard to tell from symptoms if you have an intestinal virus or food poisoning. Suspect food poisoning if others who have eaten the same foods you did also have symptoms.

Lactose Intolerance

Lactose intolerance results from a lack of an enzyme (lactase) needed to digest the sugar (lactose) in dairy products.



Abdominal Pain, *Continued*

Symptoms of lactose intolerance are:

- Abdominal cramping, pain, and bloating after drinking milk or eating other dairy products
- Gas and diarrhea

Menstrual Cramps in Females

Hormones cause the uterus to go into spasms. Premenstrual bloating increases the abdominal pain. Symptoms of menstrual cramps are:

- Mild to severe abdominal pain
- Back pain, fatigue, and/or diarrhea

Peptic Ulcer

A peptic ulcer is an ulcer in the stomach or first section of the small intestine. Symptoms include:

- A gnawing or burning pain between the breastbone and navel. This is the most common symptom. The pain often occurs between meals and in the morning. It may last from a few minutes to a few hours and may be relieved with eating or antacids.
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Nausea or vomiting dark, red blood or material that looks like coffee grounds
- Bloody, black, or tarry stools

The 2 most common factors associated with peptic ulcers are:

- An infection with *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) bacteria
- The repeated use of aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as over-the-counter and prescribed ibuprofen.

Peptic ulcers are not caused by stress, but stress can aggravate them. (See “Stress” on page 53.)

Treatment

Treatment depends on the cause. The key is knowing when it’s just a minor problem like a mild stomach ache or when it’s something worse. Pain that persists can be a sign of a medical condition or illness. Very severe abdominal pain usually requires immediate medical care.

Questions to Ask

Is the abdominal pain very severe? Is the pain so bad that you can’t move or gets a lot worse when you move?

YES



NO

Are all of these **symptoms of appendicitis** present?

- You have not had your appendix removed.
- Pain that usually starts in the upper part of the stomach or around the belly button and that moves to the lower right part of the abdomen. The pain can be sharp and severe.
- Tenderness when the right lower area of the abdomen is pressed
- Nausea, vomiting, or no appetite
- Mild fever

YES



NO

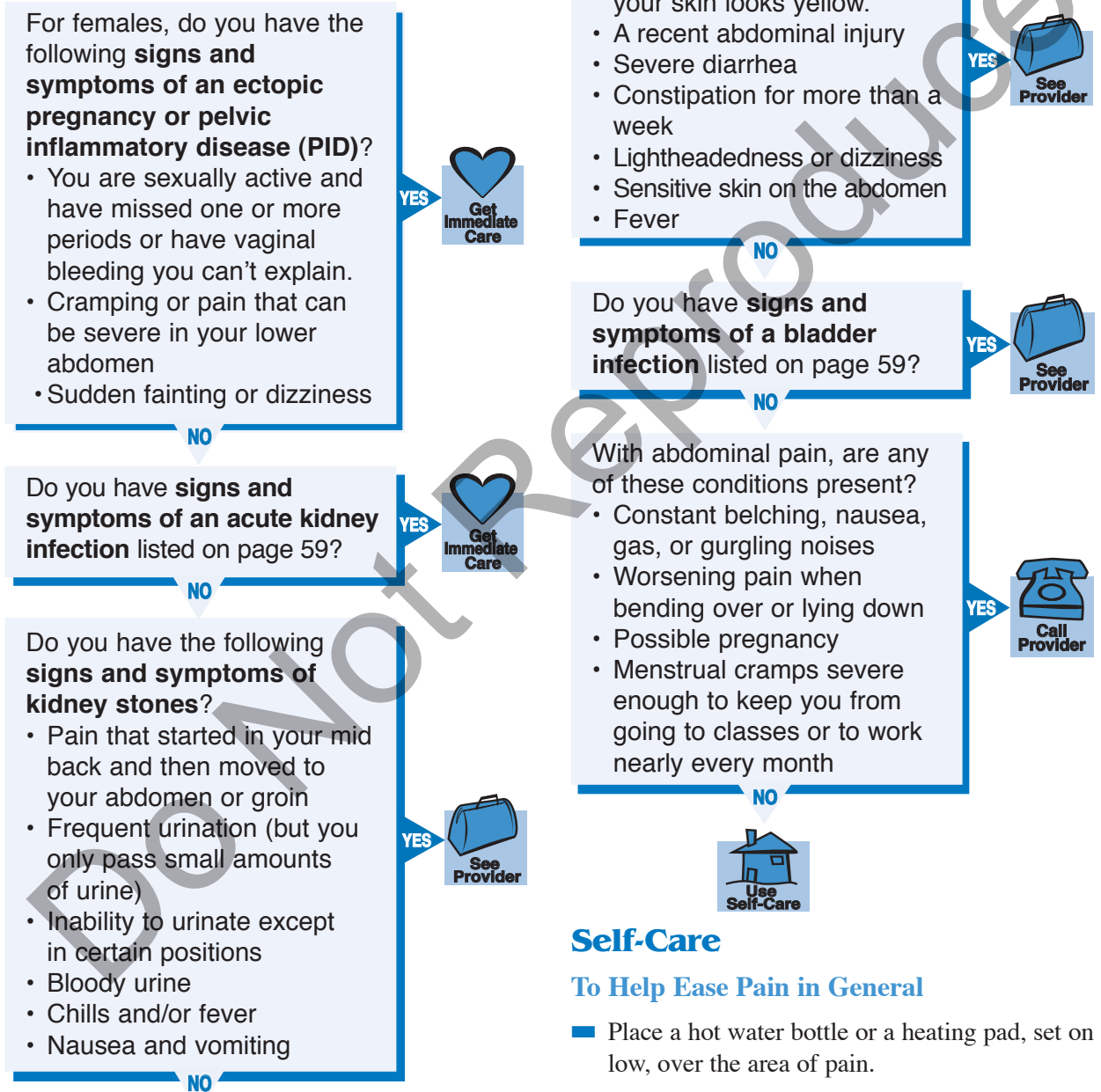
Flowchart continued on next page





Abdominal Pain, *Continued*

Flowchart continued



Self-Care

To Help Ease Pain in General

- Place a hot water bottle or a heating pad, set on low, over the area of pain.
- Find a comfortable position. Relax.

Flowchart continued in next column



Abdominal Pain, *Continued*

- Take an over-the-counter medicine for pain that does not cause stomach upset. (See “**OTC Medications**” on page 76.)
- Don’t wear tight-fitting clothes.
- Don’t do strenuous exercise.
- Eat foods as tolerated.

For Constipation

Eat foods high in fiber: Bran; whole-grain breads and cereals; and fresh fruits and vegetables.

- Drink at least 1½ to 2 quarts of water and other liquids every day. Hot water, tea, or coffee may help stimulate the bowel.
- Get plenty of exercise.
- Don’t resist the urge to have a bowel movement.
- Antacids and iron supplements can be binding. If you get constipated easily, discuss the use of these with your health care provider.
- Don’t use “stimulant” laxatives, such as Ex-Lax, or enemas without your provider’s okay. Long-term use of them can make you even more constipated and lead to a mineral imbalance and reduced nutrient absorption. If needed, take an over-the-counter bulk-forming laxative, such as Metamucil.

For Food Poisoning

- To prevent food poisoning:
 - Wash your hands and food preparation surfaces and utensils, especially after handling raw meat and eggs.
 - Cook foods to a safe temperature. Follow product and/or recipe directions.

- Refrigerate perishable foods promptly. These include milk, cheese, meat, poultry, eggs, and fish. Refrigerate leftovers, and use them within 3 to 4 days.
 - Hot foods should be kept at or above 140°F. Cold foods should be kept at or below 40°F. Carry items in a thermos or with a cold pack, if necessary.
 - When in doubt, throw it out.
- When you have food poisoning, follow self-care measures in “**Vomiting & Nausea**” on page 66.

For Lactose Intolerance

See “**Self-Care for Lactose Intolerance**” on page 26.

For Menstrual Cramps

- Take an over-the-counter medicine for menstrual cramps. (See “**OTC Medications**” regarding “**Menstrual cramps**” on page 76.)
- Drink hot tea, (regular, chamomile, or mint).
- Hold a heating pad or hot water bottle on your abdomen or lower back.
- Take a warm bath.
- Gently massage your abdomen.
- Do mild exercises, such as yoga and walking.
- When you can, lie on your back and support your knees with a pillow.
- Rest. Avoid stress as your period approaches.

{*Note:* If you get stomach aches due to stress, see “**Stress**” on page 53 to 55 for information on how to deal with it.}





Acne

“Zits are the pits! I was hoping that by the time I got to college, my pimples would be gone. They weren’t. I went to a dermatologist and did what he said. It’s easier to look in the mirror now.”

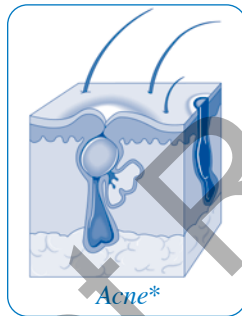
Sally J., Valparaiso University

Acne is a common skin condition. It occurs most often in teenagers and young adults, but can persist into adulthood.

Signs & Symptoms

The following occur on the face, neck, back, and/or shoulders:

- Whiteheads and/or blackheads
- Red and painful pimples
- Deeper lumps (cysts or nodules)



Causes & Risk Factors

Acne results when oil ducts below the skin get clogged. Factors that help cause acne include:

- Hormone changes during adolescence
- Changes in hormone levels before a female’s menstrual period or during pregnancy
- Rich moisturizing lotions or oily makeup
- Emotional stress
- Nutritional supplements that have iodine
- Some anticonvulsive medications (for seizures) and lithium (used to treat some forms of depression)

- Illegal (anabolic) steroids (used for muscle-building)

Foods and beverages, such as chocolate, nuts, greasy foods and cola do not cause acne. If you find that eating certain foods make your acne worse, avoid them.

Treatment

Mild acne can be treated with self-care (see page 11). When this is not enough, a health care provider can prescribe one or more of the following:

- A topical cream, gel, or liquid with retinoic acid (Retin-A). **{Note:}** Retin-A makes your skin more sensitive to the sun.}
- A topical cream, lotion or wipe with an antibiotic, such as clindamycin or erythromycin.
- An antibiotic pill, such as minocycline or tetracycline. **{Note:}** These medicines can make birth control pills less effective and make your skin more sensitive to the sun.}
- For some females, a specific birth control pill.
- Oral retinoic acid (Accutane). This is usually prescribed for severe acne. **{Note:}** Discuss this medicine with your health care provider. Females should not get pregnant while they take this medicine and for at least 1 month after stopping it as it can cause severe birth defects. There is also some evidence that pregnant females should avoid contact with sperm from males who take Accutane. In addition, Accutane may cause depression, psychosis, and rarely, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, and suicide.}



Acne, *Continued*

Questions to Ask

Are you taking the medicine Accutane and are you planning suicide, making suicidal gestures, or do you have repeated thoughts of suicide or death?

YES



NO

Is your acne very bad and do you have signs of an infection, such as a fever and swelling at the acne site?

YES



NO

Do you have any of these problems?

- The acne results in scarring.
- The pimples are big and painful or widespread.
- The acne causes a lot of emotional embarrassment.

YES



NO

Have you tried self-care and it doesn't help or does it make your skin worse?

YES



NO



Self-Care

- Gently wash your skin, where the acne appears, twice a day. Use a mild soap and clean washcloth. Work the soap into your skin gently for 1 to 2 minutes. Rinse well. **Don't scrub.**

- Wash after you exercise or sweat.
- Wash your hair at least every other day.
- For males: To soften your beard, wrap a warm towel around your face before you shave. Shave along the natural grain of the beard.
- Leave your skin alone! Don't squeeze, scratch, or poke at pimples. They can get infected and leave scars.
- Use an over-the-counter lotion or cream that has benzoyl peroxide. (Some people are allergic to benzoyl peroxide. Try a little on your arm first to make sure it doesn't hurt your skin.) Follow the directions as listed.
- Don't spend too much time in the sun especially if you take antibiotics for acne. Don't use sun lamps.
- Use only oil-free and water-based makeups. Don't use greasy or oil-based creams, lotions, or makeups.
- If you take an antibiotic for acne treatment and get signs of a vaginal yeast infection (see page 61), use **"Self-Care/Prevention For a Vaginal Yeast Infection"** on page 64.



For Information, Contact:

American Academy of Dermatology
888.462.DERM (462.3376)
www.aad.org



General Safety Guidelines

- Learn your school's safety guidelines and follow them. Read your school's safety handbook. Memorize the telephone number(s) for emergency help, such as 9-1-1. If possible, carry a cell phone with you at all times. Pre-program emergency telephone numbers in the phone to be able to call them quickly.
- Drink responsibly, if at all. Don't use drugs. Be careful around other persons who drink heavily and/or use drugs, too.
- Always wear a seatbelt in a motor vehicle. Wear a helmet when riding on a motorcycle, bike, or when rollerblading. Don't ride with a driver who has been drinking or doing drugs. Designate a sober driver.
- To Avoid Being Robbed:
 - When you go out, go with a friend or a group of people, especially at night and to unfamiliar places.
 - Use ATM machines in well-lit areas, preferably while a friend is with you.
 - Keep your doors and windows locked, especially when you are alone.
 - Lock your bike with a U-shaped lock that is hard for someone to remove.
 - Hold your backpack, purse, etc., securely so someone can't grab it from you. Don't leave these and other personal items, such as your laptop computer, unattended.
 - Have your car, house, or room keys in your hand, ready to unlock your doors.
- Don't let repair persons and maintenance staff in your dorm room or house without proper identification and authorization.
- To Avoid Fires:
 - Don't smoke in bed or when you are very tired. Better yet, **don't smoke at all!**
 - Follow fire safety precautions when cooking in your dorm room or kitchen.
 - Follow your school's policy on candle use.
 - Keep a working fire extinguisher in your dorm room or house.
- Report suspicious behaviors and activities to your school's security or the police.
- Take a class, etc. to learn how to avoid sexual assault.
- To Manage Conflict Without Violence:
 - Be assertive, not aggressive when you communicate.
 - Learn to deal with frustration, disappointment, rejection, ridicule, jealousy, and anger.
 - Accept differences in others, including sexual preferences, ethnic and religious backgrounds, etc. You do not need to change your convictions, but don't expect other persons to change theirs either.
 - Be an active listener. Pay attention to what the other person is saying and try to understand his or her point of view or simply accept it as an opinion.
 - Take a class or seminar in conflict resolution to gain skills in managing conflict.
 - When you can't resolve a conflict on your own, get help.





General Safety Guidelines, Continued



For Information, Contact:

Your school's Student Health Service, Student Counseling or Mental Health Service, Office of Student Conflict Resolution, Office of the Ombudsman, or Student Affairs

The National Crime Prevention Council's Online Resource Center
www.npc.org

For Sexual Assault/Hate Crimes/Other Crimes
The National Center for Victims of Crime
800.FYI.CALL (394.2255) • www.ncvc.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline
800.799.SAFE (799.7233) • www.ndvh.org

Alcohol & Alcohol Safety

Before drinking, think about its possible consequences (e.g., academic and health problems, unsafe sex, assault, injury, and even death). These consequences affect the person who drinks as well as other students (whether they choose to drink or not) and the community as a whole. See "Effects of Alcohol in your Blood" box in the next column.



Effects of Alcohol in Your Blood

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. How drinking affects your body and mind depends upon your blood alcohol concentration (BAC). BAC is related to how much alcohol you drink in a given period of time and your body weight.

% of Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)

Body Weight	Number of Drinks in Two Hours*				
(lbs.)	2	4	6	8	10
120	0.06	0.12	0.19	0.25	0.31
140	0.05	0.11	0.16	0.21	0.27
160	0.05	0.09	0.14	0.19	0.23
180	0.04	0.08	0.13	0.17	0.21
200	0.04	0.08	0.11	0.15	0.19

BAC Effects

0.05%	Relaxed state. Judgement is not as sharp. Release of tension; carefree feeling.
0.08%**	Inhibitions are lessened.
0.10%**	Movements and speech are clumsy.
0.20%	Very drunk. Can be hard to understand. Emotions can be unstable. 100 times greater risk for traffic accident.
0.40%	Deep sleep. Hard to wake up. Not able to make voluntary actions.
0.50%	Can result in coma and/or death

* 1 drink equals 1½ ounces 80-proof hard liquor, 12 ounces beer, or 5 ounces wine.

** Some states use 0.08 as the lowest indicator of driving while intoxicated. Some use 0.10.



Alcohol & Alcohol Safety, *Continued*

Alcohol Poisoning

Call 9-1-1 for one or more of the following signs of alcohol poisoning or combining alcohol and other drugs, such as sedatives or tranquilizers. **Act quickly. Alcohol poisoning can be fatal.**

- Unconsciousness. This means the person is hard to rouse and can't be made aware of his or her surroundings. This can be brief, such as with fainting or blacking out. It can put a person into a coma.
- No breathing or slow and shallow breathing. This means 10 or fewer breaths per minute or time lapses of more than 8 seconds between breaths.
- Slow pulse rate (40 or fewer beats per minute)
- Skin that is cold, clammy, and/or pale or blue in color

{*Note:* Before emergency care arrives, place the person on his or her side with the knees bent, to prevent choking, if he or she vomits. Loosen the person's clothing around the neck and check the mouth and back of the throat to see that nothing obstructs the person's breathing. Stay with the person.}

Alcohol Safety Tips

- Choose substance-free housing, if available and desired.
- Be aware and think about the risks and consequences of drinking, including getting arrested, getting sick, contracting an STD, etc. One incident of alcohol use could cause you to do something you will regret for the rest of your life. Alcohol plays a part in most sexual assaults.
- Don't mix drinking with driving, drugs, or operating machines. Doing so can be fatal. Designate a sober driver.
- Don't give in to peer pressure or drink because "everyone else does it." Not everyone drinks. Be with people who drink non alcoholic beverages or ones that look like "drinks," such as non alcoholic beer in a glass. Also, it is better to get medical help for a person who needs it instead of worrying about getting a friend in trouble.
- Drink alcohol only if you want to, and if you do:
 - Know your limit and stick to it or don't drink any alcohol.
 - Drink slowly. You are apt to drink less. Nurse one drink during a party. Take fake sips, if necessary. In reality, anything over two drinks does not increase the feeling of pleasure. Drinking too much leads to being unable to enjoy yourself.
 - Eat when you drink. Food helps to slow alcohol absorption.
 - Alternate an alcoholic beverage with a non alcoholic one. Use non alcohol or reduced alcohol beverages. Don't drink distilled beverages straight. Dilute them. Use more and more mixer and less and less alcohol. After two drinks, your taste buds are dulled and you won't be able to notice much difference.
 - Don't participate in drinking contests and games.





Alcohol & Alcohol Safety, *Continued*



For Information, Contact:

Emergency Medical Service (Call 9-1-1) if you suspect alcohol poisoning or a drug overdose

Your school's Student Health Service, Student Counseling Service, or Alcohol and other Drug Program

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Helpline
800.ALCOHOL (252.6465) • www.adcare.com

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters
(includes Alateen)
888.4AL.ANON (425.2666) • www.al-anon.org

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
www.aa.org

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
National Drug Treatment Referral Routing Service
800.662.HELP (4357)

Facts on Tap Web site
www.factsontap.org

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
818.773.9999 • www.na.org

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism
(NIAAA)
www.nih.gov • www.thecoolspot.gov

Drugs & Drug Safety

After alcohol, the most common drugs used on college campuses are tobacco (see “**Don’t Use Tobacco Products**” on page 88) and marijuana. Other drugs used are amphetamines (uppers); barbiturates (downers); hallucinogens, such as LSD; inhalants; and narcotics, such as cocaine. On the increase is the use of substances known collectively as “club drugs.” These are used at all-night dance parties, such as “raves” or “trances,” dance clubs, and bars. Examples are MDMA (Ecstasy), GHB, Rohypnol, Ketamine, methamphetamine, and LSD.

The safest use of drugs is no use of drugs!

Drug Chart

Drug Name(s)	Dangers of Use
Cocaine. This drug is also called blow, crack, crank, “C”, coke, nose candy, rock, and white girl.	Increases pulse rate and blood pressure. Causes insomnia, irritability, and paranoia. Can result in severe depression, convulsions, heart attack, lung damage, hallucinations, brain damage, risk of infection (hepatitis, HIV from using contaminated needles), coma, and death.

Chart continued on the next page



Drug & Drug Safety, *Continued*

Drug Name(s)	Dangers of Use
Depressants. Examples are alcohol, barbiturates, sedatives, tranquilizers, downers, ludes, reds, and yellow jackets.	Causes drowsiness, slurred speech, drunkenness, memory loss, sudden mood shifts, depression, and lack of coordination. Can result in shallow breathing, dilated pupils, clammy skin, weak pulse, coma, and death.
Ecstasy. This is MDMA. Other names are Adam, Clarity, Lover's Speed, and K.	Euphoric state initially, but depression can occur after taking the drug. Also carries the risk of a heat stroke from lack of fluids and sweating from dancing too long, especially in the hot environment of a club. May lead to a heart attack, seizure, and stroke.
GHB and GLB (a similar drug that turns into GHB in the body). Other names are: Grievous Bodily Harm; Liquid Ecstasy, Liquid Sex, Georgia Home Boy, and Scoop.	Common date rape drug that results in nausea, vomiting, a feeling of intoxication, and amnesia-like symptoms. The drug slows the heartbeat, reduces blood pressure, and can cause the user's breathing to stop. Overdose results in unconsciousness, coma, and eventual death. There is little difference in the dose that can get someone high and one that can cause death.
Inhalants. Examples are vapors from: Solvents, such as gasoline; aerosols, such as hair sprays; anesthetics, such as ether, chloroform, nitrous oxide; and spray paints, especially gold and silver.	Slow heart rate, breathing and brain activity. Headaches, dizziness, nausea, lack of coordination, slurred speech, blurred vision. Can result in suffocation, heart failure, unconsciousness, seizures, brain damage, and even death.
Ketamine. This drug is also called: Special K, K, Vitamin K, and Cat Valiums.	Causes dream-like states and hallucinations. Can cause delirium, amnesia, impaired motor functions, high blood pressure, depression, and breathing problems, that can result in death.
LSD. This is also called acid, bloomers, and yellow sunshines.	Causes hallucinations, dilated pupils, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, sleeplessness, dry mouth, and tremors. Nausea, weakness, numbness or trembling are common. Long term use can cause persistent psychosis and what used to be called "flashbacks" – re-experiencing symptoms of past hallucinogen use even though not taking the drug at the present time.

Chart continued on the next page





Drugs & Drug Safety, *Continued*

Chart continued

Drug Name(s)	Dangers of Use
Marijuana. This is also called pot, grass, reefer, herb, jay, joint, smoke, weed, and AMP (marijuana with formaldehyde).	Can result in feelings of panic, impaired short term memory, decreased ability to concentrate, fatigue, paranoia, and possible psychosis. Also causes lung damage.
Methamphetamine. This drug is also called speed, ice, chalk, meth, crack, fire, and glass.	Can result in memory loss, agitation, aggression, and violent or psychotic behavior and potential cardiac and neurological damage. Can contribute to higher rates of transmission of hepatitis and HIV, if injected. Can result in heart attacks, seizures, and death from overdose.
Rohypnol. This is also called R-2, Rib, Roofies, Rope, and Forget-Me Pill.	Common date rape drug. Used in sexual assaults. Results in decreased blood pressure, drowsiness, visual disturbances, confusion, nausea, and vomiting. When mixed with alcohol or other drugs, this clear, odorless, and tasteless drug can cause death.

Signs of a Drug Overdose

Signs of an overdose depend on the type of drug used. Call 9-1-1 or get emergency care for one or more of the following:

- Unconsciousness. This means the person is hard to rouse and can't be made aware of his or her surroundings. This can be brief, such as with fainting or blacking out. It can put a person into a coma.
- No breathing or slow and shallow breathing. This means 10 or fewer breaths per minute or time lapses of more than 8 seconds between breaths.
- Slow pulse rate (40 or fewer beats per minute)
- Suicidal gestures
- Seizures
- Tremors
- Sudden hostile personality or violent behavior
- Very rapid pulse rate (140 or more beats per minute) and/or extreme anxiety or paranoia

For Information, Contact: Places listed on page 70.