

## **Marijuana Use Shows Signs of Increasing**

While there were decreases in the use of cocaine, methamphetamine and LSD among youth, teen marijuana use showed no signs of slowing down. In fact, according to the 2009 Monitoring the Future Survey, marijuana use among adolescents has increased gradually over the past two years after years of declining use. The MTF Survey, which surveys youth in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, was released today by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the University of Michigan.

Overall, drug use remained steady, but several drugs showed signs of increasing with attitudes softening for drugs such as marijuana, ecstasy, inhalants and LSD. For example, the percentage of 8<sup>th</sup> graders who view occasional marijuana use as potentially harmful dropped to 44 percent, compared to 48 percent last year. In addition, the perception of “great risk” associated with marijuana use declined among 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders.

“So far, we have not seen any dramatic rise in marijuana use, but the upward trending of the past two or three years stands in stark contrast to the steady decline that preceded it for nearly a decade,” said University of Michigan researcher Lloyd Johnston, the lead investigator on the MTF survey.

The survey also showed no declines in the abuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs. In fact, past year non-medical use of Vicodin and OxyContin increased during the last 5 years among 10<sup>th</sup> graders and remained unchanged among 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Nearly 1 in 10 high school seniors reported using Vidodin non-medically; 1 in 20 reported abusing OxyContin.

Gil Kerlikowske, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, cautioned that while there were no big jumps in drug use, that shouldn't be cause for celebration. “We are containing drug use, but is containment really what we're after? I would say certainly not,” he told the audience during a press conference in Washington, D.C. “If we're not making progress, we're probably losing ground.”

Another drug showing no signs of letting up was over-the-counter cough and cold medicines containing dextromethorphan (DXM), with annual prevalence rates remaining unchanged since 2006, when use of these drugs was first measured. Researchers are also concerned about the abuse of prescription stimulants to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). While the annual prevalence rate of Ritalin abuse fell from 5 to 2 percent among 12<sup>th</sup> graders, more than 5 percent of 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported abusing Adderall, which is also used to treat ADHD and was included in the survey for the first time.

Other areas of concern from the survey were:

- From 2008 to 2009, lifetime, past month, and daily use of smokeless tobacco increased among 10<sup>th</sup> graders.
- The decline in alcohol use, including binge drinking, has leveled off among 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, with only 8<sup>th</sup> graders showing a continued decline.

- Fewer 10<sup>th</sup> graders viewed weekend binge drinking as harmful, and fewer high school seniors disapproved of having one or two drinks every day. On the other hand, researchers noted that the perceived availability of alcohol among 8<sup>th</sup> graders decreased. “It would appear that state and local efforts to crack down on sales to underage buyers, perhaps along with greater parental vigilance, have had an effect,” Johnston noted.
- The perceived risk associated with using inhalants, ecstasy and LSD continued to decline.