

Teens Involved in Sports Drink More But Use Drugs Other Than Marijuana Less



Teens who participate in sports are more likely than their non-athlete peers to abuse alcohol, but less likely to use illicit drugs other than marijuana, according to an analysis of 17 past studies published in the journal *Addictive Behaviors*.

"It starts with parents but coaches and sporting organizations have a critical role to play here also," said lead author John Cairney of McMaster University. "If adults in these contexts are 'looking the other way' in regards to this behavior, we need to do something about it. Education, including training at the coach level (certification) may be one solution. Raising awareness of potential dangers to parents and youth themselves is important also."

Another study suggests teens who participate in sports may have great access to opioid pain medications, Reuters reports.

The author of that study, Philip Veliz of the University of Michigan's Institute for Research on Women and Gender, said that parents and coaches should be aware of the potential danger of misusing these medications, since opioids have a high potential for abuse. The findings appear in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

"Sports can be a positive protective factor in a young person's life because of all those great things?structure, goal setting, fair play and achievement," Steve Pasierb, President and CEO of The Partnership at Drugfree.org told Reuters. "But it's not a silver bullet." He said that too much structure and stress might be one of the reasons teens use drugs. He noted being introduced to painkillers after athletic injuries could lead to misuse later on.