



Q & A

Q: People tell me marijuana is natural and not addictive. Is that true?

A: Research confirms that you can become hooked on pot. It is also important to note that drugs can dominate your lifestyle, control how you spend time, and influence the people you hang out with. Research also proves that short-term effects of using marijuana are sleepiness, impaired or reduced short-term memory, increased heart rate, paranoia, and hallucinations. Long-term effects of using marijuana are elevated cancer risks and decreased testosterone levels for men.

Q: If Jesus and his Disciples drank wine in the Bible, why can't I drink alcohol?

A: While alcohol in and of itself is not bad, we need to be careful with the excessive use of any substance—it can easily deaden our defenses and negate our free will. When someone has a few drinks, they become more “relaxed” with other things in life—and this is where we need to be extra cautious. Additionally, as Orthodox Christians, we abide by the laws of our local government (Matthew 22). Since the minimum drinking age is 21 in the United States, we should refrain from alcohol until then.

Books:
Breaking the Chains of Addiction: How to Use Ancient Eastern Orthodox Spirituality to Free Our Minds and Bodies From All Addictions by Victor Mihailoff. Regina Press, 2005
Steps of Transformation: An Orthodox Priest Explores the Twelve Steps by Fr. Meletios Webber. Conciliar Press, 2003

Online Resources:

- Treatment Facilities: www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse websites for teens: www.checkyourself.com
www.teens.drugabuse.gov

If you need help for yourself or a friend, please do not wait any longer. Talk to your parents or contact your parish priest for assistance. For more info, contact the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug information at 800-729-6686.

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GET THE FACTS

Addiction can happen even after one use. Regular drug abuse or sustained exposure to a drug, even for a short period of time, can cause physiological dependence.

Drug & alcohol abuse causes brain damage. Drug abuse affects the way the brain functions and alters its responses to the world.

Drugs are more dangerous today. Over the years, drugs have been modified either biologically or chemically to create higher concentrations of the active ingredient—the thing that produces the “high.”

Substance abuse increases the risk of injury. Car crashes, falls, burns, drowning and suicide are all more common when people are under the influence.

NAVIGATING THROUGH YOUR TEEN YEARS: DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

KNOW THE SIGNS

How can you know if a friend or loved one has a problem with drugs or alcohol? Sometimes it's hard to tell. Most people won't just walk up to you and ask for help. If your friend or loved one has one or more of the following signs, he or she may have a problem:

- Giving up activities or things they used to enjoy such as sports or hanging out with friends who don't use drugs or drink.
- Pressuring others to do drugs or drink.
- Getting in trouble with the law.
- Taking risks, including sexual risks and driving under the influence.
- Feeling run down, depressed or suicidal.
- Suspension from school/after school activities.
- Missing work or school, failing grades.

THE CHURCH SPEAKS

As a teenager, you face pressures every day. Whether it's casual drinking, binge drinking or experimenting with drugs, your friends' influence may cause you to do things you wouldn't normally do. Although it may be tough, you are called to be examples in the Faith, to resist these pressures, and be a Christian example to others.

Your free will is lost.

The Church teaches that God created each of us with free will, and in His own “image and likeness” (Genesis 1:26). We are all given the chance to either turn towards or away from God, but alcohol and drugs take away this opportunity by deadening our reason and intellect. When we become dependent on substances rather than God, we lose our ability to worship and glorify Him.

Christ isn't your #1 priority anymore.

When a person is addicted to drugs and/or alcohol, those substances often become more important to that person than God. As Christians, however, our loyalty is first to God. Any kind of addiction puts the object/idol in His place.

Your body is a temple.

The Church views the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Over time, drug use, leads to the deterioration (“indirect suicide”) of the body. It means that we are ignoring our responsibility to keep our temple pure, holy, and healthy.

A false sense of reality.

While it may be easy to use drugs or alcohol in order to escape your worries and problems, Christ promises to never give us more than we can handle (1 Cor. 10:13), asking us to deal with things in a real and honest way.

God is always with us.

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk writes, “God is present in every place, and He is with us wherever we may be. And anything we may do, we do before Him and His holy eyes.”