



## DRUGS AND YOUR BRAIN: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



### WEB RESOURCES

[cibhs.org/yorcalifornia](http://cibhs.org/yorcalifornia)  
[drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org)  
[samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)  
[drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)  
[getsmartaboutdrugs.gov](http://getsmartaboutdrugs.gov)



**Your Brain is Still Developing:** By the time you are a teenager, many parts of your brain have developed. You may be able to perform complicated calculations. You may even have a sharper memory than some adults! But, one critical part of your brain — **the prefrontal cortex** — won't be developed until your mid twenties. This puts teens at a higher risk than adults for experiencing the harmful effects of drugs like opioids and alcohol.

**Addiction Risks.** Teens are at a higher risk of developing addiction. Scientists believe that addiction is closely linked to dopamine, the chemical that helps transmit signals to the brain. Any rewarding activity, causes a dopamine release, but the surge is much higher and more intense with drugs. The limbic system of teens are very sensitive to dopamine. Because if this, teens may crave drugs more strongly than adults. The earlier that someone starts drug use, the higher his or her addiction risk.

**Long Term Brain Changes.** As you grow and learn, your body strengthens pathways between neurons in the brain and gets rid ones that aren't used. Exposing the teen brain to drugs can change how these pathways function. This can cause problems with attention, memory, and problem solving that can last all the way through adulthood.

“Taking chances is a part of growing up. But it can be dangerous when it comes to drugs and alcohol”