

5 DRUGS COMMONLY ABUSED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS



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College should be an exciting time for teens and young adults.

For many, it's their first taste of independence, as they're around new people and new experiences. However, while college can be an enriching experience, students also have to avoid various pitfalls. One of the main ones is substance abuse.

Because movies like *Animal House*, *Road Trip* and *Old School* romanticize partying and irresponsible behavior, society often sees college shenanigans as a rite of passage. In reality, some students take the partying too far. What starts as casual weekend partying can quickly develop into a nightly habit. If students not careful, they can lose everything they've worked so hard to get.

Discover the five most commonly abused drugs among college students, and how Sober College in Los Angeles, California, can help individuals before it's too late.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADDICTION

It's naive to think that college students never drink or do drugs. With so much pressure to perform well academically, it's only natural that they let off steam from time to time. However, it's important to recognize when students cross the invisible lines between casual use, substance abuse and addiction.

For starters, individuals who start out abusing substances never intend to get hooked. In many cases, it's a slow-developing arch. Individuals use to relax, then start using more as they've built up a tolerance. After a while, they can't function without these addictive substances. No matter their substance of choice, their lives revolve around getting the next fix. This constant urge to use no matter the consequences is a strong indication of addiction.

It should be noted that not everyone gets to this point. The medical community has constantly searched for reasons why some people can abuse substances without ever developing a dependency or addiction, while others are hooked at their first taste. In any case, the "why" isn't as important as the "how." There's no denying the straight path from substance use to abuse and addiction.

While the substances college students abuse change in popularity, here are five that are currently the most common on campuses across the country.

According to a USA Today article from 2015, over

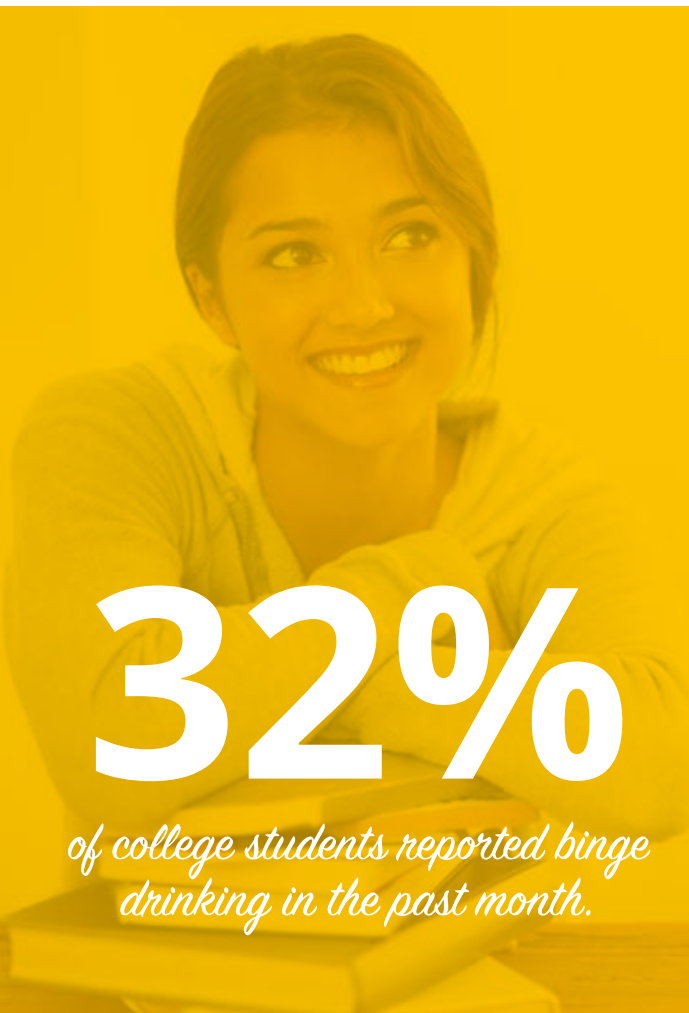
5,000,000 STUDENTS

admitted to either past-month binge drinking or illicit drug use



NUMBER ONE: **ALCOHOL**

Alcohol is, by far, the most accessible substance on this list. In fact, it might even be the most dangerous because society views its consumption as acceptable. Alcohol is at the heart of just about every on-campus party atmosphere. Nearly universally, it's considered a go-to substance when individuals want to relax or unwind.



Many college students struggle with binge drinking, which medical experts define as consuming a set amount of beverages within a two-hour timeframe. Women exceed the binge-drinking threshold after four beverages, while men surpass it after five. Whether male or female, binge drinking blurs judgment, decision making and motor skills. In fact, more than 18,000 college students die each year due to alcohol-related accidents or injuries.

Of all the substances on this list, alcohol addiction is probably the toughest to recover from. For one thing, drinking is an actively promoted, socially acceptable activity. How can individuals embrace recovery when their friends and family members can consume it without experiencing the same issue?

When individuals do decide to quit, alcohol withdrawal symptoms can be incredibly difficult to overcome.

At a minimum, alcohol withdrawal can be uncomfortable. However, in some cases, the symptoms can be deadly.

24–72 hours after ceasing consumption, delirium tremens (DT) could set in. Symptoms of delirium tremens include hallucinations, paranoia, disorientation and seizures. Without medically managed detox, these symptoms can be too much to handle, or even fatal. Individuals may feel that the best way to cope is to go right back to the bottle, since it often seems easier than getting help.

NUMBER TWO: MARIJUANA

As far as drugs go, society has softened its stance on marijuana. In fact, several states have taken steps to legalize its use. Users gravitate toward marijuana because of its euphoric and relaxing properties.

However, there's no denying that marijuana abuse is still a problem on many college campuses.

While various strains have different effects, marijuana typically slows people down. Seems harmless, right?

Smoking marijuana can lead to many adverse short and long-term side effects. Short-term side effects like lethargy and anxiety are common. However, teens and young adults who use marijuana may experience up to an eight point decrease in IQ by the time they reach adulthood.

Especially with recent steps to legalize marijuana use, there's a common misconception that there's no such thing as a marijuana addiction. While the drug may not be as physically addictive as alcohol or heroin, it's definitely psychologically addictive.

For many college students, smoking weed becomes a part of everyday life. They need to “wake and bake”—smoking to get their days started—or get high to complete routine tasks. They may find themselves spending money meant for bills simply to get high and experience marijuana's numbing effects.



NUMBER THREE: ADHD MEDICATIONS

Especially at prestigious college institutions, students experience a lot of pressure to stay in good academic standing. Some students are willing to do anything to gain an extra edge. Because of this, prescription stimulants like Adderall and Ritalin have become increasingly popular on college campuses.

These drugs speed up central nervous system processes, making it easier for students to focus. They may take Adderall to study all night before a big exam in order to stay up and study later or to finish a last minute essay. In their minds, short-term abuse is worth the reward of a good grade.

However, it doesn't take long for prescription stimulant addiction to set in. In fact, instead of taking the drugs just to study, some students use them to prolong nights of partying. When combined with alcohol or other drugs, this form of polysubstance abuse becomes incredibly dangerous. In many cases, young adults don't become aware that they've had too much until it's too late.

While the short-term side effects can be damaging, prescription stimulant abuse can also have dangerous long-term consequences. Some of the most dangerous outcomes of long-term abuse include cardiovascular problems. These medications can drastically speed up your heart rhythm and increase your blood pressure, both of which can increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.



NUMBER FOUR: PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

Across all demographics, the prescription opioid epidemic is spiraling out of control. However, the addictive properties of these drugs have had a major impact on young adults in particular.

Whereas prescription stimulants speed up the central nervous system, prescription opioids like OxyContin and Vicodin slow it down immensely. When people use them as their doctors prescribe, prescription opioids make it easier to cope with varying degrees of pain. However, many college students take prescription synthetic opioids without a prescription. These individuals seek the drug for the feelings of euphoria that it generates.

Falling prey to prescription opioid dependence is incredibly easy. In the search for euphoria, these drugs manufacture dopamine, a chemical that triggers the brain's reward center. It doesn't take long for users to build up a higher tolerance, requiring them to take more and more of the drug to feel the desired effects.

By itself, this newfound dependence is dangerous. However, because opioids are highly addictive in nature, individuals will go to great lengths to get them. When prescriptions become harder to find, many students gravitate to a cheaper, more potent alternative: heroin.

Much like alcohol, attempting to quit prescription opioids or heroin can be uncomfortable or even painful. Because of this, it's important to start recovery with a medically monitored detox program.

16%

of all college students have used non-prescribed pain pills at some point in their lives .



NUMBER FIVE: **BENZODIAZEPINES**


Also known as tranquilizers or sedatives, doctors prescribe benzodiazepines like Xanax and Valium to treat various forms of anxiety and depression. When used as directed, these drugs can make life easier for individuals struggling with different mental health issues.

However, recreational benzo use and abuse on college campuses has surged in recent years.

Because of their relaxing properties, benzos are one of the most common choices for polysubstance abuse. For instance, college students might drink heavily while also consuming Xanax for a more intense experience. While this form of polysubstance abuse generates increased short-term euphoria, it also greatly increases the potential for alcohol poisoning or overdose.

As mentioned, benzodiazepines are meant to help individuals manage their anxiety or depression. Ironically, long-term abuse or misuse can make those problems worse. Additionally, benzo abuse can also impair cognitive function, which is why many individuals who abuse these drugs slur their speech.

As with most addictive substances, quitting benzodiazepine use abruptly can be problematic. By the time college students decide to quit, they've usually developed a strong psychological dependence. Going through benzodiazepine withdrawal without medical supervision can be life threatening.



There's been a
450%
*increase in benzodiazepine use
among college students within the
past decade.*

HOW SOBER COLLEGE CAN HELP

When it comes to addiction treatment, college students and their families have plenty of options. However, many treatment facilities take a blanket approach to recovery. Additionally, they may not understand the unique needs of teens and young adults. In the fight against addiction, young adults aged 18–26 need a place where they can find real recovery through individualized treatment. Sober College in Los Angeles, California provides an effective and unique solution.

Not only do we offer each client a customized substance abuse treatment plan, but we give each client the opportunity to earn college credits. Thanks to our partnership with Woodbury University, we offer five on-site, WASC accredited college courses with rolling enrollment. Not only are these courses conducive to recovery, but they're also transferable to universities nationwide.

Our Courses Include:

- Public speaking
- Creative writing
- General psychology
- Sociology
- Civic engagement

At Sober College, we offer multiple levels of compassionate care to ensure young adults get the individualized attention they deserve. Some of our treatment programs include:

- Detox
- Residential treatment
- Outpatient treatment
- Extended care
- Aftercare and sober living programs upon initial program completion

Along with proven therapies and educational opportunities, college students can take advantage of several experiential activities, such as rock climbing, surfing, individual and team sports, and trapeze therapy.

Don't let substance abuse stop you from achieving your goals. Get the help you need and the treatment you deserve at Sober College.

If you or your college-aged child is struggling with substance abuse, **reach out to Sober College today at 866.406.6146.**