

# **Regional Advisory Board (RAB) of Community Anti-Drug Coalitions**

June 2020 Newsletter

## **New Resource Available**

### **NIDA Launches FREE Drug Education Booklet Series for Middle School Students**

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has released a nine-booklet series to educate middle school students from grades 5 to 8 on substance abuse. Each of the booklets focus on various drug related topics, each framed from how the brain and body is affected by various drugs. Especially relevant topics discussed include opioids, nicotine, vaping, and tobacco. This series comes with a Teacher's Guide which features evidence-based information and research as well as activities meant to engage students. These booklets and resources can all be downloaded online for free at

<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/teachers/mind-matters> in English or Spanish. Hard copies of the English booklets can also be ordered for free at:

<https://drugpubs.drugabuse.gov/publication-series/mind-matters>

## **Did You Know?**

**A new synthetic opiate, Isotonitazene, has been detected in the blood of people who died of overdoses in Illinois and Indiana, where it was mixed with cocaine.**

The drug comes in a white or off-white powder form or pressed into counterfeit opioid pills to look like Oxycodone and identical to an 8mg Dilaudid (hydromorphone) tablet. The pills may have an M or 8 stamped on one side. Derivatives of the drug have been sold online and appear to be entering the United States internationally. Isotonitazene is derived from etonitazene, a powerful analgesic opioid first identified in the 1950s that is explicitly illegal. The new one isn't yet on the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's controlled substances list, so it's not illegal. The potency of this drug is similar or greater than fentanyl. It has been called the "new" fentanyl. Like any opioid, it can cause respiratory failure, unconsciousness, and even death. The potency of isotonitazene may require more than a usual dose of naloxone to restore breathing. (Cincinnati Enquirer, 5/18/20)

**Antidiarrheal Loperamide Is Latest Candidate for Abuse** When used as directed, the FDA-approved OTC agent loperamide (Immodium) is an effective and safe antidiarrheal. At therapeutic doses, its actions are restricted to the gastrointestinal tissue. However, reports from the FDA indicate that the abuse and misuse of loperamide is becoming more common. The recommended maximum daily dose for adults is 8 mg for OTC use and 16 mg by prescription. When larger-than-recommended doses are taken, the medication can pass the blood-brain barrier and cause opioid-like effects. This practice of the ingestion of supratherapeutic doses, in excess of 70 mg daily, has been gaining popularity among users of opioids to manage withdrawal symptoms and, less commonly, to achieve psychoactive opioid-like effects. When loperamide is administered in supratherapeutic doses, life-threatening cardiac adverse effects can occur. Loperamide overdoses have been steadily increasing in incidence and severity nationwide over the past 5 years. Researchers explored loperamide overdoses from a national poison control registry and discovered a 91%

increase from 2010 to 2016. The study results showed a growing number of instances in which patients with opioid use disorder misused loperamide to prevent or self-treat withdrawal symptoms. To a lesser extent, some patients took substantial doses to get a high comparable to that of fentanyl, heroin, or oxycodone. In this Rutgers University study, the majority of abusers were Caucasian men and women, most of whom took the equivalent of 50 to 100 2-mg pills a day. The abuse and misuse of non-prescription drugs such as loperamide is especially alarming, as the drug is easily accessible online and in retail stores and is inexpensive. (pharmacytimes.com, 3/13/20)

**The nutmeg challenge has reemerged on TikTok and it's one that could have deadly consequences.** Users drink a mix of two to four tablespoons of nutmeg with milk or water and document their reactions, as large amounts of the spice can lead to intoxication. But the high that comes from the spice is dangerous. It takes five to 20 grams, or one to four teaspoons, of ground nutmeg to become intoxicated, according to the American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC). This is an extremely large quantity of the spice. A typical pumpkin pie recipe, for instance, only calls for 1/4 teaspoon of nutmeg. When that much nutmeg is ingested, symptoms begin within three to six hours, lasting for 12-24 hours. That period is "often followed by deep sleep," according to the AACC. Symptoms, which are dose-related, the AACC says, include dry mouth, agitation, hypothermia, hallucinations, among others — and in some cases, coma and death have been associated with nutmeg overconsumption. Some users even said in their clips that they only tried the challenge because they thought people were "faking" their highs. A representative for TikTok told Insider in a statement that the company is actively removing videos encouraging the nutmeg challenge. (Insider 4/20/2020)

**More Americans are ordering more rounds, and that's leading to more funerals, according to a new study on alcohol-related deaths.** Looking at data from the National Center for Health Statistics, researchers estimate deaths from alcohol-related problems have more than doubled over the past nearly 20 years. Death certificates spanning 2017 indicate nearly 73,000 people died in the U.S because of liver disease and other alcohol-related illnesses, up from just under 36,000 deaths in 1999. The research shows that in 2017, alcohol proved to be even more deadly than illicit drugs, including opioids. That year there were about 70,000 drug overdose deaths — about 2,300 fewer than those involving alcohol, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, alcohol-related overdoses — either alone or with drugs — rose between 1999 and 2017. Other alcohol-related causes included heart disease, cancer and accidental injuries such as falls. The number of deaths caused by drunken driving over the same two decades declined. Other findings, as quoted in the study:

- 70.1% of the population aged 18 and older ... consumed alcohol in 2017, averaging approximately 3.6 gallons of pure alcohol per drinker.
- While the overall prevalence of drinking and binge drinking did not change for men, there was a 10.1% increase in the prevalence of drinking and a 23.3% increase in binge drinking among women.
- Increases in consumption were larger for people aged 50 and older relative to younger age-groups. (NPR, 1/8/2020)

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