

# Learn The Link: Drugs Can Give You More Than A High

(NAPSA)—The face of HIV/AIDS is changing in this country. A recent research report on the subject by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) makes this point. It notes that while injecting drugs is a practice often associated with HIV, less understood is the role that drug abuse plays more generally in spreading the disease. This is because the “high” that people get from drugs may alter their judgment and lead them to take risks they normally would not take—including having unprotected sex. Certain drugs also increase sexual desire and so when used in social situations can heighten this risk. Teenagers and young adults may be particularly vulnerable. That is why NIDA has launched a multimedia campaign to help young people “learn the link” between drug abuse and HIV infection.

NIDA's large body of drug abuse research shows that all drugs of abuse, including marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine and “ecstasy,” affect areas of the brain that control decision-making. And although many young people are not concerned about becoming infected with HIV, engaging in risky behavior puts them in real danger. “In recent years, the number of young people in the U.S. diagnosed with AIDS rose substantially,” said Dr. Nora Volkow, NIDA's Director. “And because drug use encourages risky behaviors that can promote HIV transmission, NIDA views drug abuse treatment as essential HIV prevention.”

Young women are increasingly vulnerable. According to the Cen-



## A new campaign explains the link between drug use and HIV infection.

ters for Disease Control and Prevention, by December 2004, more than 5,000 teenagers were reported as having AIDS. And while in earlier years most reported adolescent AIDS cases were in males, the number of female AIDS cases has increased to be nearly equal with males. Further, among the roughly 11,400 women diagnosed in 2004, including adolescents, roughly seven out of 10 got the disease from having sex with infected male partners.

Minority populations are also at risk for the negative consequences of drug abuse and HIV. For example, in 2004, black and Hispanic women made up only 25 percent of all U.S. women, yet accounted for around 80 percent of AIDS cases diagnosed in women

that year. And African Americans, who make up just 13 percent of the population, accounted for approximately half of the total AIDS cases diagnosed in 2004.

That is why NIDA, together with its partners, is working to get out this important message to teens, women, and young adults about the link between drug abuse and HIV. Research, outreach and public awareness initiatives—all efforts to reduce drug abuse can help stop the unhealthy practices that can lead to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and continue to turn the tide on this deadly epidemic.

For more information on the link between drug abuse and HIV/AIDS, visit [www.hiv.drugabuse.gov](http://www.hiv.drugabuse.gov), a Web site created by NIDA, a component of the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Or call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at (800) 729-6686.

### The Difference Between HIV And AIDS

HIV, or Human Immunodeficiency Virus, attacks the body's disease-fighting (immune) system. If the virus overwhelms the body's immune system, a person loses his or her resistance to disease and can acquire serious infections and tumors. Once this happens, the disease that began as HIV becomes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Seeking medical treatment as soon as possible after becoming infected with HIV is critical. Anyone who thinks he or she may be at risk for HIV, through drug use or sexual behavior, should be tested for the virus.

