

Internet Drugs

What Parents Should Know

Instead of buying drugs on sketchy street corners in bad neighborhoods and dangerous alleys behind nightclubs, more illicit drug users are turning to the internet to “score” their drug of choice.

It's All Online . . .

You can buy pretty much anything you want online, including powerful opioids, Adderall and synthetic compounds that change their formulas frequently and ever so slightly to stay a step ahead of the law.

All it takes is a few clicks to have a package on the way to one's front doorstep.

The Dark Web

Most online dealers hang out on the “dark web.” The dark web is only accessible via a special browser called Tor that makes its user anonymous and extremely difficult to trace. The dark web is rife with drugs, child pornography, illegal services, stolen identity information, and other illegal activities.

People who seek drugs online take extra steps to cloak their identity by paying with cryptocurrency such as bitcoin and using an untraceable email address.

And Not-So-Dark Web

But although the Darknet is a haven for drug activity, a U.S. Senate inquiry found that some drugs, specifically opioids, can be found and purchased through a simple Google search. Recently, when members searched for “buy fentanyl online,” hundreds of websites popped up. Fentanyl is an opioid 100 times stronger than heroin that has been responsible for thousands of overdoses across the United States.

Dangerous Drugs From Odd Places

In addition to opioids, legal drugs like salvia, K2, and bath salts are also easy to buy online. Salvia, a plant grown in Mexico, produces hallucinations and distortions of reality so severe that others must standby to prevent harm to the user. State laws vary on whether the drug is legal to possess, making online sales legitimate. And the laws change constantly.

Many illicit drug sites that you can find on common search engines are based in China. Although the Chinese government has cracked down on online drug sales—with the death penalty—the incentive to sell illicit drugs is high. Illicit fentanyl at \$6,000 an ounce can sell on the street for \$1.6 million.

Exotic, Harmful and Fatal Substances

Makers of K2, or synthetic marijuana, change up formulas to stay just within the law, too. K2, also known as spice, is a mix of industrial chemicals sprayed on dried plant material. The chemicals are designed to mimic THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. Users are not exposed only to hazardous chemicals, but also to potentially unsafe levels of synthetic THC. If fentanyl is mixed with any substance, the result could be death for the user.

Synthetic cathinones, commonly known as bath salts, can also be legally purchased online. The drug mimics the effects of the khat plant, which produces a mild stimulant high. Like K2, makers substitute chemicals to mimic the khat plant's properties. A bath salts overdose can result in death, and the drug is addictive.



Buying online drugs through the worldwide web can be traced by law enforcement, but with so many transactions taking place, it's unlikely that a buyer will be caught. Websites shut down and pop back up again under another name to avoid detection.

Parental Tough Love and Control Over Internet Devices

To keep your children from buying drugs online, it's important to have access to all their electronic devices.

Here's what to know:

- Know the purpose of every program and app on your family's phones, tablets and computers. Make sure Tor browsers and other software used to access the dark Web are not on your family's devices.
- Keep close track of debit and credit cards used by your children. Your transaction history can tell you who has received money from your accounts. Know where your (or your kids') money is going.
- Be aware of packages coming into your home, especially if they were sent via the postal service. Online drug dealers prefer the U.S. Postal Service for delivery because suspicious packages are examined by hand, rather than by the more accurate, automated methods used by UPS and FedEx.

If you or a loved one has a problem with drugs, help is available. Call your Employee Assistance Program to discover counseling, treatment, and other options to get back on the road to better health. ■

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