

Illegal Online Drug Sales

Online exchange of an illegal substance for money between a dealer, known online as a “plug,” and a buyer.

Adolescents are frequent users of social media and often engage in risky behaviors because the decision-making part of their brains is not fully formed. **This makes them perfect targets for plugs.**

Plugs may “friend” a child online, build trust, and then **offer them drugs.** They also **post ads on social media**

using emojis to communicate the drugs for sale.

A child with access to social media can find, purchase, and have **drugs delivered to their front door** with a few swipes. Once a child clicks on a dealer account, the social media platform’s algorithm suggests similar drug dealer accounts to that child.

Drug traffickers have turned smartphones into a one-stop shop to market, sell, buy, and deliver deadly, fake prescription pills.

Source: DEA, 2022

Drugs commonly sold online and related emojis

Despite a decrease in drug use, the adolescent overdose death rate has skyrocketed since 2019. This is primarily caused by the introduction of **counterfeit, or “fake” pills** to the drug supply.

These pills look like real prescription drugs but may be **laced with deadly fentanyl.** Other drugs may also be laced with fentanyl, including marijuana, cocaine, MDMA, and Adderall, among others.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Even in small doses, it can be deadly.

Oxycodone



Percocet



Fentanyl



Xanax



Adderall



Marijuana



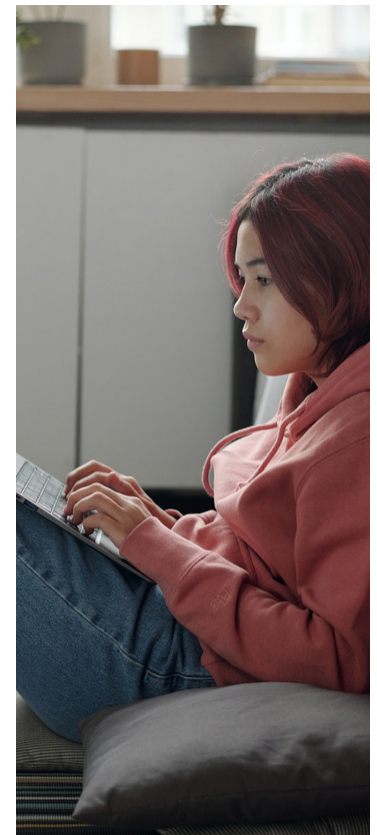
Cocaine



MDMA and Mollies



Scan to see a complete list of drugs sold online.



Counterfeit Drugs

OXYCODONE



REAL

FAKE

ADDERALL



REAL

FAKE

Source: DEA

Online Harms Prevention Action Kit
fairplayforkids.org



Protect Your Child

Delay social media and communication apps for children.

Create a supportive environment with open lines of communication. Build a strong support network, including trusted adults—family members, teachers, counselors—whom they can turn to for guidance.

Educate your children about the dangers of buying or accepting any drug (online or in person) that does not come from a legal pharmacy.

Stay informed and stay engaged about the trends and threats related to online drug sales, and regularly discuss internet safety with your children.

Supervise and monitor your children's internet and consider using parent control software or monitoring apps to track their online activities.

Start a Conversation



Have any of your friends been in situations where there were opportunities for drug or alcohol use?

Do you think they felt pressured?

Have you ever been in this situation?



Why do you think some teens use drugs?

What are some healthier options you can think of to deal with stress, anxiety or depression?



I've also heard that dealers lie to teens about what they're selling and sell them deadly drugs.

Have you heard about that?



I've heard the drug dealers try to connect with teens on social media. Do you know about that?

Has anything like that happened to you or your friends?



Take Action if your child is using illegal drugs

- Let them know you love them, and you want to help them stay safe. If they choose to tell you, thank them for being honest with you.
- Call the SAMHSA hotline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357).
- Search for local resources—youth/family recovery coach, therapist, pediatrician—and get help.
- Discuss harm reduction.

For more information on harm reduction, scan here.

