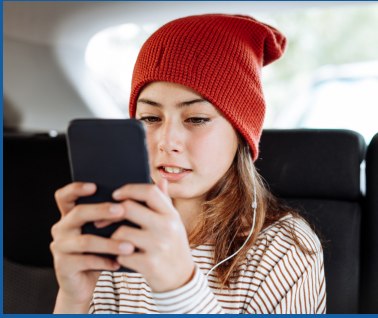


Buying Drugs Online: What Parents Need To Know



Many young people purchase drugs online. They are exposed to offers for drugs through different social media apps. Popular apps include Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and Twitch. Many of these apps are free to download from app stores.

How Do Teens Buy Drugs Online?

Drug traffickers market illegal drugs and counterfeit pills using emojis, and adolescents request and buy drugs using these pictograms. However, emojis on their own are not indicative of substance use.

Some teens may try to buy drugs from online pharmacies or through social media, but many are not legitimate and may sell fake medications containing fentanyl, increasing the risk of overdose.

Parents and caregivers should consider whether or not they have witnessed changes in their teen's behavior, appearance, eating and sleeping habits, friends, interests, and mood that are often synonymous with substance use. Such changes would be reason to have a conversation about possible drug use.

How Can Parents And Caregivers Keep Teens Safe?

The most important thing that parents and caregivers can do is to maintain a good relationship with their children, while educating themselves about substance use. **Here are a few ways parents and caregivers can protect their teens and prevent them from purchasing drugs online:**

- **Keep the communication lines open.** Parents should create an open line of communication with their teens and engage them in conversation about their friends, what is happening in their school, their interests, and more. Building close relationships with their adolescents can help parents notice changes in their behavior that could point to substance use.
- **Make sure they know the consequences.** Since drugs can be so readily available online, teens may think that they aren't really that harmful. However, drug traffickers are known to lace pills with other substances (like fentanyl) that will increase the drug's potency and make its consumption even more dangerous.

- **Check out their "searches" (if drug use is suspected).** Parents can look through their teens' browsers or Google searches on their computers or cell phones. They should keep an eye out for any "How to buy ___ online" -type searches and ask questions about anything that causes strong suspicion. This may be an uncomfortable conversation and parents may be accused of spying. Parents can respond by letting their teens know that they are worried and only want to keep them safe.
- **Monitor their delivered packages (if drug use is suspected).** Drugs are often delivered in unmarked and discreet packages. If parents find their adolescents getting mail or packages that they don't expect, they should ask them about it. Parents may want to be present when their teens opens packages.

Connecticut Resources

CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

www.ct.gov/DMHAS

24/7 Access Line
1.800.563.4086

Change the Script
drugfreect.org

National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.nida.nih.gov

Get Smart About Drugs www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov

BuyingDrugsOnline_WhatParentsNeedToKnow-02.06.2026



 **Wheeler** | **CONNECTICUT Clearinghouse**
a program of the Connecticut Center for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

800.232.4424 (phone)
www.ctclearinghouse.org