

This issue of *What's Trending* explores emerging risks impacting youth and communities. It examines the potential role of certain drugs sold in gas stations in triggering the fourth wave of the opioid crisis and highlights the fact that alcohol taxes have not increased since 1991. Readers are provided practical guidance on cell phone application safety and insights into how long alcohol truly stays in the system. The issue also covers topics related to marijuana, including the effects of 100 mg edibles and the differences between vaping and smoking. Overall, it provides timely information to help individuals make safer choices and stay informed about evolving public health concerns.

what's trending?

ALCOHOL & DRUGS IN GREAT FALLS & CASCADE COUNTY

October 2025, Issue 10

Drug Sold in YOUR Gas Station May Trigger the 'Fourth Wave' Of The Opioid Crisis

7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), up to 13 times stronger than morphine, is a **Kratom** compound the FDA warns could fuel a new opioid crisis. Sold in powders, vapes, drinks, pills and even gummies with **no federal age limits**, it's **addictive, overdose-prone and often marketed deceptively**.

While Kratom leaves have been touted for medicinal purposes, concentrated **7-OH poses high risks**. The FDA has proposed making it a Schedule I drug, but **banning 7-OH alone won't solve the problem**: Kratom leaves remain legal and their main alkaloid, mitragynine, can turn into 7-OH naturally in your liver or in labs.

With raw Kratom still widely available, restricting only 7-OH may play into industry strategy—making the rest of Kratom seem safer and harder to regulate. **Lawmakers need broader rules to address real risks**.

Montana Mother Speaks Out After Son's Death Linked to Kratom

A Montana mother is warning others about the dangers of Kratom after her son died in September 2024 from **acute mitragynine intoxication**. He had used Kratom for years to manage chronic pain, believing it was safe. Kratom's active ingredient can convert into 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), 10–13 times more potent than morphine, which can cause addiction, withdrawal and fatal overdose. **Kratom remains unregulated, leading to inconsistent potency and increased risk**. [CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE KRTV NEWS STORY](#).

Montana DOJ Alert Comes After Mother Shares Son's Kratom Death Story

The Montana Department of Justice has issued a public warning about 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-

OH), a potent opioid compound derived from Kratom, a plant imported from Southeast Asia and commonly consumed as a tea. **Attorney General Austin Knudsen** emphasized that 7-OH is 13 times more potent than morphine and can lead to respiratory depression, physical dependency and withdrawal symptoms. **Since 2020, 29 deaths in Montana have been linked to 7-OH.** Despite its potency, 7-OH is sold over-the-counter in various forms, including capsules, liquids and powders, at gas stations and convenience stores. Kratom remains unregulated at both the state and federal levels. A recent legislative attempt to regulate it failed in the Montana House of Representatives in 2025. [READ MORE.](#)

From VHS to TikTok: Decades Have Passed, But Alcohol Taxes Haven't



The year was 1991. **MacGyver** and **Home Improvement** topped television ratings and it was also the **last time federal alcohol taxes were raised**. In the decades since, alcohol has continued to take a deadly toll—linked to a 94% higher risk of suicide and responsible for more than 178,000 deaths each year. That's **488 lives lost daily or about twenty every hour**. Even more alarming, 4,000 young people die annually from excessive drinking. Raising federal alcohol taxes today could help curb this crisis, saving lives and protecting future

generations. [READ MORE.](#)



CELL PHONE APPLICATION SAFETY CHECKLIST

Can a random adult communicate with my child	NOT SAFE!
Can private messages be exchanged	NOT SAFE!
Do messages automatically delete	NOT SAFE!
Can your child share pictures	NOT SAFE!
Can your child share their location	NOT SAFE!

Thank you [Officer Gomez](#) for this cell phone safety checklist. Officer Gomez gets messages almost every day asking if certain cell phone apps are safe for kids. The truth is, there are too many apps to know them all. To help, he put together a quick safety checklist that parents can use to evaluate any app themselves. **Just run the app in question through the list above and see if it passes.**

Some “**sleeper**” apps that might not seem risky but can be unsafe include:

- Bible App
- Fitbit
- CashApp
- Pinterest
- CapCut
- Music apps
- Govee app

- ...and many more.

Don't assume an app is harmless just because it looks simple or popular.

Think you're in the clear after a night out? Here's how long alcohol really stays in your system.



Alcohol doesn't stick around in your system forever, but how long it lasts depends on a few factors. After drinking, alcohol peaks in your bloodstream roughly an hour later, and it generally takes about 20–25 hours for the body to fully process a standard drink. This article explains **how alcohol is metabolized by the body**, **how long it takes to clear** and **how long it can be detected in tests**.

Everyone metabolizes alcohol differently, with things like genetics, liver health and drinking habits all influencing the rate at which it leaves your system. [READ MORE.](#)

Are 100 mg edibles the next big thing?



100 mg THC gummies are shaping up to be a serious safety concern. Traditional 10 mg gummies already have users taking multiple pieces before feeling anything. A single 100 mg gummy—**ten times the usual dose**—greatly increases the risk of overconsumption, especially given edibles' **delayed onset**. Even a fraction could cause extreme intoxication, nausea or panic, and in rare cases, hospitalization. While appealing to users, these giant gummies pose a real danger without careful dosing and clear labeling, and state regulations are struggling to keep up with the trend.

From Separate Streams to One: Alcohol & Cannabis Regulation Merge in Montana



Montana's Cannabis Control Division and Alcoholic Beverage Control Division have officially merged to form the new **Cannabis and Alcohol Regulation Division (CARD)**. Initially, operations will stay largely the same, but CARD will keep the public updated as changes roll out.

Questions? For alcohol, call 406-444-6900 or email DORAlcoholicBeverageControl@mt.gov. For cannabis, call 406-444-0596 or email DORCCD@mt.gov.

Vaping vs. Smoking Cannabis: What's the Difference? It's not as confusing as it might seem.



confusing as it might seem. Both deliver THC, but the risks are clear—lung irritation, unpredictable effects and harmful chemicals lurk in every puff. Don't be fooled by flashy devices or "cleaner" smoke—your lungs and brain pay the price either way. [READ MORE.](#)

TIPS FOR TALKING TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- By this age, most youth have had many opportunities to try alcohol or other drugs. Even if they haven't tried, they have probably seen others do it, sometimes to excess and perhaps with serious consequences, whether in person or on social media.
- Teens this age typically understand what can happen if they use drugs. As they think about their future, remind them that substance use can jeopardize their dreams.
- Teens want independence but still need appropriate limits. Have them help you set those limits (such as curfews). Ask them what consequences they think are fair for breaking the rules.
- Tell your children often that you care about them and they are important to you. A strong bond will make your child more likely to come to you with questions or concerns about drugs, including alcohol or other issues.
- Know what's trending. Ask your teen about drugs that are an issue at their school, in friends' homes and at parties.
- Emphasize the dangers of buying pills or any medicine through Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X, YouTube or other social media platforms. Visit [DEA.gov/onepill](https://www.dea.gov/onepill) with your teen to learn more about the prevalence of fake pills.
- Your children may try to draw you into a debate about marijuana use for medical or other reasons. Use this opportunity to have an informed conversation with them. Make sure your child knows that marijuana use in any form is illegal for youth and young adults under 21, has harmful effects on the developing teen brain and is prohibited by federal law.
- As with youth at any age, praise them for making good choices. If they know you support them and care about their health and well-being, it can motivate them to stay drug free. Parenting does not stop when your child goes to college or moves out. Many colleges have programs for first-year students that cover the school's alcohol and other drug misuse prevention policies, programs, and services. If so, attend with your child; if not, find out which office is responsible for providing that information and go with your child to obtain it.

For more information, go to Chapter 4 of *Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Substance Use Prevention*.

Montana Substance Violation Reporting: What to Know & Where to Go

- **Unlawful or Suspicious Alcohol-Related Activities** - Report violations such as underage drinking or serving/selling to someone who is actually, apparently or obviously intoxicated. [CLICK HERE.](#)
- **Cannabis-Related Issues**
 - For concerns regarding **medical or adult-use cannabis dispensaries**, [CLICK HERE.](#)
 - Report illegal sale or use of **synthetic cannabis** by [CLICKING HERE.](#)
 - If you suspect **illegal sale of consumable hemp products** (not authorized as a food or drug by the FDA), report it by [CLICKING HERE.](#)
- **Tobacco/Nicotine Product Violation** - Report sales to under the age of 21 to keep nicotine and tobacco out of the hands of youth. [CLICK HERE.](#)
- **Clean Indoor Air Act Violations** - Submit violations including vaping, which is now included under the Act. [CLICK HERE.](#)

Reminder: Vaping is now included in Montana's Clean Indoor Air Act. To help your business or organization comply and reduce



enforcement issues, free “No Smoking, Vaping or Marijuana” signs are available for entrances.

Order your free signs here:

<https://mthhspromotions.rocsoft.com/public/login>

(Quick account setup required)



In partnership with Alliance for Youth, the Cascade County Substance Abuse Prevention Alliance (SAPA), Great Falls/Cascade County Crimestoppers and KGPR, the What's Trending? podcast is recorded and aired on 89.9 KGPR every month.

Listen to the **September 2025** episode of the ***What's Trending?*** podcast. This issue highlights new risks facing youth and communities—from Kratom and Kava drinks sold without age limits to the vulnerable first six weeks of college when underage drinking often starts. We look at teen marijuana use and suicide risk, current Montana suicide data, hidden dangers like Benadryl and why nicotine isn't the answer. Plus, we cover gaps in Kratom regulation, marijuana and heart disease, and the expanded support available through 988. [Click here](#) to listen now!



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