

This month's issue is packed with timely substance misuse prevention news, surprising health facts and practical resources. Inside you'll find:

- 🌿 A historic Massachusetts ballot initiative that could become the first to reverse marijuana legalization
- ♻️ How Helena is leading the way in safe vape disposal
- 🚭 Why progress against smoking has stalled—and what it means
- 💜 A local support group for people looking to quit Kratom
- 🧠 Three ways nicotine affects mental health
- ❤️ How tobacco and nicotine can affect your sex life
- 📖 The surprising history of Heroin as a cough remedy
- ✅ 25 Things We Should All Know About Marijuana
- 🍷 Why Gen Z may be entering its "alcohol era"
- 💙 How you can recognize and support 988 Day

There's something for everyone this month—whether you're a parent, educator, prevention professional or simply interested in making healthier communities.

what's trending?

WHAT NORTH CENTRAL MONTANA NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL & DRUG TRENDS

September 2026, Issue 9

Historic Ballot Initiative Could Make Massachusetts the First State to Undo Marijuana Legalization

Ten years after Massachusetts voters approved recreational marijuana, the state is now poised to decide whether to reverse course. This November, voters will consider a ballot initiative that would repeal adult-use marijuana legalization, ending recreational sales and returning Massachusetts to a medical-only marijuana system. The measure has reignited a statewide debate over marijuana's impact on public health, youth use, impaired driving and community safety. Regardless of the outcome, the vote will be closely watched nationwide as the first serious effort by a state with legal recreational marijuana to ask voters whether legalization should be rolled back. [READ MORE.](#)

Helena Sets the Standard for Safe Vape Disposal in Montana

As disposable vapes become more common, communities are facing a new challenge: how to safely dispose of them. **Every disposable vape contains a lithium-ion battery that can spark dangerous fires** if thrown in the trash or recycling.

Rather than waiting for the problem to grow, the City of Helena has taken action. Helena and Lewis & Clark County expanded their battery recycling program, launched a public awareness campaign and now encourage residents to bring used vape devices to the [Helena Transfer Station](#) for safe disposal.

It's a simple solution that protects sanitation workers, landfill employees, first responders and the environment while reducing the risk of battery fires.

Helena's efforts show that communities don't have to wait for state or federal action to make a difference. By providing a safe, convenient way to dispose of vape devices, Helena is setting an example that other Montana communities should consider following.

Decades of Progress Against Smoking Stalled

Smoking rates have dropped dramatically over the past few decades, thanks to strong prevention campaigns, education and quit-smoking resources. But that progress is at risk.

A recent [New York Times](#) article reports that the Trump administration has cut funding for several major federal anti-smoking efforts, including the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health and the well-known [Tips From Former Smokers](#) campaign (see ad messaging below).

While decisions in Washington may change, the need for prevention doesn't. Communities still play the biggest role in helping young people avoid nicotine addiction. Continued education, honest conversations and local prevention efforts remain some of the most effective tools we have to keep the next generation nicotine-free.

A TIP FROM A FORMER SMOKER

RECORD YOUR VOICE FOR LOVED ONES WHILE YOU STILL CAN.

Terrie, Age 52
North Carolina

A TIP FROM A FORMER SMOKER

When it came to smoking, I had to face the music.

Fred W., age 76, California

Fred got throat cancer from smoking and had his vocal cords removed. After surgery, he realized he wouldn't be able to play his beloved saxophone anymore. He wishes he had never started smoking.

Looking to quit Kratom? Dynamic Recovery offers a local Kratom Support Group.

If you or someone you know is ready to stop using Kratom, local support is available in Great Falls. Dynamic Recovery offers a Kratom Support Group where participants can connect with

others who understand the challenges of quitting, share experiences and receive encouragement in a supportive, judgment-free environment. Recovery doesn't have to happen alone.

Every Thursday @ 10 a.m.
Dynamic Recovery Drop-in Center
220 6th St. S., Suite E
Great Falls, MT 59401

**QUITTING
KRATOM
SUPPORT
GROUP**

- Are you trying to quit kratom?
Or trying to stay kratom free?
Join us!
- Peer support from others in
recovery
- Open discussion in
confidential setting
- Resources and strategies for
overcoming kratom
dependence

📅 **Every Thursday**
🕒 **at 10 am**

Located at
Dynamic Recovery Drop in Center
220 6th St. S. Suite E

**Recovery is possible!
Support is available.**



Beyond Addiction: 3 Ways Nicotine Impacts Mental Health

Many people believe nicotine helps relieve stress, anxiety or depression, but the reality is often the opposite. This short article explains how nicotine addiction can **intensify stress** through withdrawal, **disrupt healthy brain development** in teens and young adults and **interfere with sleep**—all of which can take a toll on mental health. The good news? Many people who quit nicotine report feeling less stressed, less anxious and in a better place mentally. [Read more](#) to learn why breaking nicotine addiction can be one of the best things you can do for your mental well-being.

Did You Know That Heroin Was Originally Used as a Cough Remedy?

Although Heroin is now recognized as a highly addictive opioid, it was originally marketed by Bayer in the early 1900s as a cough suppressant and a supposedly safer, less addictive alternative to morphine. This surprising history is highlighted in a [Stories from the Collection video](#) from the DEA Museum.

25 Things We Should All Know About Marijuana

As marijuana becomes more common and more accepted, it's easy to assume it's harmless. But what does the research actually say? In *25 Things I Wish Everyone Knew About Marijuana*, Sue Rusche shares **25 evidence-based facts from Dr. Bertha Madras—a Harvard Medical School professor and nationally recognized addiction expert who has spoken in Montana**—that challenge common misconceptions and highlight what we know about marijuana's effects on health, the developing brain and addiction.

According to the article, these are 25 things we should all know about marijuana:

Is Marijuana Medicine?

1. Purified medicines are tested, regulated and free of contaminants.
2. Prescription medications are designed to treat specific conditions.
3. Medicines have a known mechanism of action.
4. Prescription drugs provide precise, consistent dosing.
5. Medications are regulated for safety and quality.
6. Every batch is manufactured to the same standard.
7. Medical drugs are produced with consistent potency and dosage.
8. Dispensary marijuana products do not meet the same standards for purity, potency or medical indications as FDA-approved medications.
9. Marijuana products lack standardized dosing, frequency and administration guidelines typical of prescription medicines.

Is Marijuana Harmful?

1. Using marijuana before age 18 is associated with a higher risk of later opioid use disorder.
2. Budtenders are retail employees—not licensed medical professionals.
3. Most Colorado budtenders surveyed recommended cannabis for first-trimester morning sickness despite concerns about fetal brain development.
4. Cannabis use disorder has increased from about 9% of users in 1994 to an estimated 24–30% today.
5. More than one-third of veterans who use cannabis meet the criteria for cannabis use disorder.
6. There are now more daily marijuana users than daily alcohol users.
7. Research suggests THC affects adolescent brains differently than adult brains, increasing inflammation in areas involved in mood, anxiety, sleep and emotion.
8. An estimated 30–50% of daily marijuana users develop cannabis use disorder.
9. Higher-potency THC is linked to greater risks of psychosis, anxiety, impaired memory, impaired driving, cannabis hyperemesis syndrome and addiction.
10. A Canadian study found schizophrenia cases linked to cannabis use disorder increased after legalization.
11. Starting young, using frequently and using high-potency marijuana substantially increases schizophrenia risk.
12. Adolescent marijuana use is associated with poorer educational outcomes, including higher absenteeism and dropout rates and lower college enrollment.
13. Long-term marijuana use beginning in adolescence has been associated with an average eight-point decline in IQ.
14. Cannabis use disorder is more common among adolescents and young adults than alcohol use disorder.
15. Marijuana use has been associated with increased suicidal thoughts and suicidal behavior.
16. Only about 28% of youth believe marijuana is harmful, reflecting historically low perceptions of risk.

[Click here](#) to read the entire article.

Gen Z is in Their Alcohol Era

"Well, well, well, it turns out Gen Z isn't so special after all. Endless ink has been spilled — or since we're in the digital era, pixels rendered— about Gen Z's aversion to alcohol. The online narrative has been that the youngs are teetotalers, recusing themselves from America's big bad drinking culture and having all sorts of booze-free fun. Millennials are the real drunks, the story goes, and the generational up-and-comers are taking the high road. Turns out, though, that Gen Z is not that different. They've just taken their time to get to the bar." [READ MORE.](#)

The Side Effect No One Likes to Talk About

Smoking and vaping don't just affect your lungs—they can affect your relationships, too. According to Truth Initiative, tobacco and nicotine use can reduce blood flow, increasing the risk of erectile dysfunction, lower sex drive by worsening stress and anxiety and make it harder to have children by damaging eggs and sperm. The article also reminds readers that support is available for anyone ready to quit nicotine. [READ MORE.](#)

THE FIRST ANNUAL #988Day

988
SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

Join us on 9/8!

**988
DAY**



No Judgment. Just Help.

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.](#)
- **Montana Clean Indoor Air Act Violations** - Submit violations including vaping, which is now included under the Act. [CLICK HERE.](#)
- **Retailer selling illegal vapes or nicotine pouches?** - Take Action. File a report by [CLICKING HERE.](#) You can do so anonymously. NOTE: There are only a handful of FDA approved (i.e. legal) vapes and pouches. If you see anything besides the following, please take the time to file a report.
 1. **FDA approved vapes:** JUUL, NJOY, VUSE, LOGIC and GLAS (Glas G2, Gold, Sapphire).
 2. **FDA approved nicotine pouches:** ONI, PLUS and ZYN.



Businesses must post clear signage at every public entrance stating that smoking, vaping or marijuana use is not allowed.

Order FREE signs here:

<https://mthhs promotions.rocsoft.com/public/login>
(Quick account setup required)



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