

This month's trending topics highlight growing concerns and important conversations impacting youth and families:

- Nicotine and back pain concerns
- Teen gambling surge
- Kratom profits over public safety
- What teens are really carrying
- The future of smoking laws and nicotine definitions
- Understanding Orphines
- Why Tom Holland quit drinking
- New "Escape the Vape" YouTube presentation

what's trending?

ALCOHOL & DRUGS IN GREAT FALLS & CASCADE COUNTY

June 2026, Issue 6

Back Pain You Can't Quit? Nicotine Might Be Why

Think smoking and vaping only hurt your lungs? Think again. Hidden beneath the surface, nicotine is quietly starving your spine of the blood flow and nutrients it needs—accelerating disc damage, increasing pain and even raising your risk of surgery. If surgery is needed, nicotine can increase the risk of complications and slow healing. [Read the full article](#) to discover how these habits could be fueling chronic back problems in ways most people never see coming—and why quitting might be one of the most powerful moves you can make for your spine.

Teen Gambling Surges With Sports Betting Parents Often Have No Idea

What used to be harmless betting pools has transformed into a fast-paced, always-on digital trap—where teens can wager on nearly every moment of a game with just a few taps. This [article](#) reveals how sports-betting apps and prediction markets are quietly pulling kids in with flashy bonuses, real-time bets and the illusion they can “beat the system,” all while many parents remain completely unaware. With alarming data showing how common underage gambling has become—and how easily teens bypass safeguards—it's a wake-up call for families navigating a world where gambling is no longer hidden, but embedded in everyday digital life.

Kratom's PR Problem: Profits vs. Public Safety

Kratom is often marketed as a “natural” solution for pain, anxiety or opioid withdrawal, but [this article](#) argues there’s a much bigger story behind the branding. As Kratom products become more popular, advocacy groups and industry-backed organizations have worked hard to shape public opinion and push legislation that protects Kratom sales and normalizes its use. Critics say the messaging downplays growing concerns from families, researchers and health agencies about addiction, contamination and overdose risks.

The article takes a closer look at how marketing and policy efforts may be influencing the public conversation around Kratom, even while federal agencies like the FDA continue to issue warnings about its safety. It encourages readers to ask tough questions about **who benefits from the growing Kratom industry**—and how public health and youth safety are getting lost in the process.

You Don’t Know the Half of What Teens Are Carrying

Teen mental health and substance use are more connected than many people realize. Too often, that connection stays hidden. This [powerful 3-minute film](#) by The Harris Project shines a light on the struggles teens face and the importance of understanding, support and early intervention. **Every parent, educator and community member should watch this.**

The Future of Smoking Laws May Depend on How Nicotine Is Defined

Britain’s proposed generational smoking ban is designed to stop future generations from ever legally buying cigarettes, but the tobacco industry is already showing how difficult that goal may be in practice. In recent years, companies have shifted toward products like vapes and synthetic nicotine that blur the line between traditional tobacco and modern nicotine delivery systems. In the United States, some vape manufacturers briefly escaped regulation by using lab-made nicotine instead of tobacco-derived nicotine, exposing a loophole lawmakers later had to close.

The UK appears to be trying to avoid the same mistake by writing the law broadly enough to include nicotine products, vapes and heated tobacco devices alongside cigarettes. Even so, tobacco companies are expected to challenge the definitions and search for new workarounds, whether through alternative chemicals, rebranded “wellness” products or emerging technologies. The battle over smoking may no longer center on tobacco alone, but on how governments define and regulate nicotine itself.

[Click here](#) to learn more about U.K.’s generational smoking ban.

From April’s Alert to This Month’s Deep Dive: Understanding Orphines

In April’s *What’s Trending*, we introduced readers to cychlorphine — a powerful emerging synthetic opioid beginning to appear in the illicit drug supply. This month, we’re taking a deeper look at the broader family of drugs known as “orphines,” why experts are increasingly concerned about them and what communities should know as these substances become more common and more difficult to detect. [READ MORE.](#)

Man Survives Kratom Overdose & Shares Warning

A Florida man who survived a Kratom product overdose is warning others about the growing risks tied to the increasingly popular substance, which is often sold in gas stations and smoke shops with little regulation. In [the interview](#), he described how quickly casual use turned dangerous and said stronger oversight is needed before the problem worsens. Health officials and addiction experts have also raised concerns in recent years about rising overdoses and deaths involving concentrated Kratom products and synthetic derivatives, warning that **the substance could become a larger public health issue if regulations do not keep pace with its growing popularity.**

Tom Holland on Why He Put Down the Bottle

Actor Tom Holland has become increasingly open about his decision to quit drinking, saying sobriety dramatically improved both his personal life and career. The “Spider-Man” star revealed he stopped drinking after participating in [Dry January](#) in 2022 and later realized alcohol had become too deeply tied to his daily routine and social life. Holland said drinking was “getting in the way” of his professional success and making the pressures of fame more difficult to handle. Since becoming sober, he says he feels more confident, focused and mentally clear. ([People](#))

Holland has also spoken publicly about how challenging the transition was at first, explaining that he leaned heavily on family, friends and sober supporters during the early stages of recovery. He admitted that one drink would often lead him to “go too far,” which helped him recognize he needed a long-term change. ([Newsmax](#))

His sobriety journey has also influenced his business ventures. In 2024, Holland launched BERO, a non-alcoholic beer brand aimed at people looking for alternatives to drinking culture. He has said he’s encouraged to see younger generations drinking less and becoming more interested in alcohol-free lifestyles. ([OK Magazine](#))

Old Habits Fade, New Products Rise in Montana

A new report summarizing tobacco product use among Montana adults is now available from the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program. The report, [2024 Adult Tobacco Use in Montana](#), uses data from the 2024 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) to examine current tobacco use trends and demographics — including emerging products like nicotine pouches.

Key findings include:

- More than 1 in 4 Montana adults currently use some form of tobacco.
- Cigarette use has reached an all-time low, with prevalence at 12%.
- E-cigarette use has doubled over the past decade, increasing from 5% to 10%.
- Nicotine pouch use is highest among young adults, with 16% reporting use.

The report provides valuable insight into changing tobacco use patterns across Montana and can help inform prevention and education efforts statewide.

Vaping might seem harmless—but it’s anything but. At Alliance for Youth, we’re empowering young people to break free from nicotine addiction and take control of their health and future. **“Escape the Vape”** is all about awareness, support and real change. Whether you’re trying to quit, helping a friend or just learning the facts, you’re not alone.



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?** - Take Action. File a report by [CLICKING HERE.](#)



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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