



## Is rock n' roll the 'gateway drug' that leadsto drink, dope and risky sex?

- Youngsters who listen to loud music at risk of drugs, alcohol and sex
- Teens who listento loud music on MP3 players have sex without condoms



Sex drugs and rock n roll: Youngsters who spend time listeningto loud music area also at risk of drug abuse, heavy alcohol use and risky sex, accordingto Netherlands researchers

The phrase 'sex, drugs and rock and roll' is part of pop culture - but it's actually true.

Youngsters who spend time listeningto loud music area also at risk of drug abuse, heavy alcohol use and risky sex.

Inthe report fromThe Netherlands, researchers found that teens and young adults who spent a lot of time listeningto loud music were also more likelysto smoke marijuana, binge drink and have sex without a condom. 'I thinkthey've really shown that sex and drugs go with rock and roll,' said Dr. Sharon Levy, head ofthe Adolescent Substance Abuse Program at Boston Children's Hospital who wasn't involved inthe new study But, Levy said, it's fartoo earlyto warn parents that listeningto loud music could leadto drug or alcohol use. The study couldn't show that one type of risky behavior ledto the other, she pointed out. And it didn't answer another important question: what type of music, exactly, were study participants listeningto? Researchers led by Ineke Vogel at Erasmus MC University Medical Center in Rotterdam surveyed 944 students from

inner-city vocational schools, aged 15 to 25, about their music-listening habits and other typical behavior. They assessed 'music-listening dose' by asking students how much time they spent listening to tunes on their MP3 players or at a club or concert and estimating how loud that music typically was for each participant. The researcher then divided the students into those exposed or not exposed to risky music levels, based on a cut-off defined as one hour per day of music at 89 decibels -- about as loud as a lawnmower -- or the equivalent. According to that definition, about one-third of the participants were risky MP3-player listeners and close to half were exposed to music at risky levels at clubs and concerts. Young people who often listened to loud music on MP3 players were twice as likely to have used pot in the last month, compared to non-risky music listeners, the research team reported in *Pediatrics* on Monday.



In the report from The Netherlands, researchers found that teens and young adults who spent a lot of time listening to loud music were also more likely to smoke marijuana, binge drink and have sex without a condom.

And those who were frequently exposed to music at clubs and concerts were six times more likely than people who weren't to binge drink and twice as likely to have risky sex with inconsistent condom use. Club- and concert-goers also happened to be less likely to smoke pot than other youths.

'We know that high-risk behaviors certainly run together, so in some ways it's not a big surprise,' Levy told Reuters Health.

The study can't say anything about whether listening to MP3 players makes people feel like smoking marijuana -- or vice versa, she said.

And a more critical question, Levy said, is whether young people are listening to music that glorifies risky behavior and making decisions about drinking, drugs or sex based on that.

'That's a really important question: is what they're hearing changing their behavior? That becomes important for parents.'

The Dutch researchers conclude that further research into risky health behaviors should take loud music listening into account, and interventions to prevent unsafe practices could target loud-music venues, like nightclubs, for maximum effect.

The current data, Levy said, shouldn't change anything about the way doctors treat their patients or how parents see their kids' music-listening, however.

'It's really an important reminder that these risk behaviors, they really go together,' she said. But, 'I don't think that we're at the point that we should say, 'Boy, you should really cut down MP3 player use' -- we should because of the hearing loss, but I don't think there's any evidence that's going to affect other risky behaviors at this point.'



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