

Gas Station Drugs:

What Parents Should Know

Unregulated and dangerous substances are being sold at gas stations, convenience stores, and online across the U.S. These products are often disguised as “herbal” or “dietary supplements,” making them seem harmless — but they can be addictive, damaging, and even deadly. Teens may be especially at risk because these substances are cheap, easy to access, and not well understood.

Here are the most common “gas station drugs” and what parents need to know:

Delta-8 THC (“Gas station weed”)

- **What it is:** A psychoactive chemical from cannabis, usually produced in concentrated form from hemp.
- **Risk:** Hallucinations, anxiety, tremors, psychosis, and even loss of consciousness. Products may contain unknown chemical since they are NOT regulated.
- **Why it’s legal:** A loophole in the 2018 Farm Bill allows hemp products with low THC to be sold – but Delta-8 can be synthesized into highly intoxicating products not limited to dispensaries.

Tianeptine (“Gas station heroin”)

- **What it is:** A drug that acts like opioids such as heroin or morphine. Never approved in the U.S. but still sold under names like ZaZa, Tianaa, Neptune’s Fix, and Pegasus.
- **Risks:** Highly addictive, dangerous withdrawal symptoms, and overdose (can be reversed with Narcan).
- **Why it’s legal:** It isn’t on the federal controlled substances list, so states must decide whether to ban it.

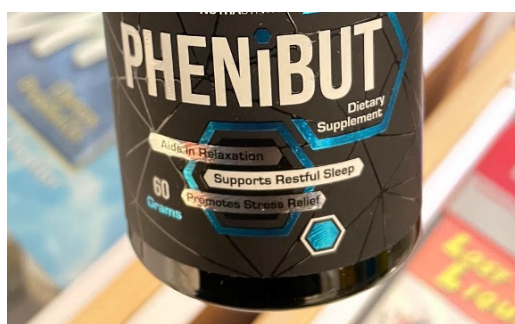


Kratom

- **What it is:** A plant from Southeast Asia that can act as either a stimulant or sedative, depending on the dose.
- **Risks:** Can cause addiction, psychosis, and is particularly dangerous when synthesized into a concentrated form called 7-OH.
- **Why it's legal:** Not federally controlled, though regulators are moving to ban the highly concentrated, 7-OH. Often marketed as a natural energy booster or mood enhancer.

Phenibut

- **What it is:** A synthetic drug originally developed in Russia for anxiety.
- **Risks:** Highly addictive, with withdrawal symptoms like prescription anti-anxiety drugs.
- **Why it's legal:** Not approved for use in the U.S., and not federally controlled. Often marketed as a stress reliever or sleep aid.



Tips for Talking to your Teen

- **Share the facts.** Many teens assume these products are “safe” since they’re sold in stores. Emphasize that “herbal” or “natural” doesn’t mean safe.
- **Stay connected.** Teens are less likely to experiment when parents talk openly, remain non-judgmental, and set clear expectations.
- **Watch for warning signs.** Sudden mood changes, sleep issues, or secrecy could signal substance use.

Other Resources

<https://candorhealthed.org/parent-information/family-resources/substance-abuse-prevention-resources/>
<https://www.samhsa.gov/substance-use/prevention/talk-they-hear-you/parent-resources>
https://www.hidta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/KP3-FINAL_r.pdf

Funded in whole or in part by:

Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery through a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



**Chicago High Intensity
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