A recent survey found high rates of regular alcohol and illicit and prescription drug use in tenth graders, reports a new study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

Researchers used data from the NEXT Generation Health study, which surveyed 2,524 10th grade students in 80 schools and 9 U.S. school districts in the spring of 2010.

Twenty-six percent of the surveyed teens reported using marijuana, making it the most common illicit drug used in the previous 12-month period. Additionally, 35 percent of the teens had used alcohol, 27 percent had engaged in binge drinking and 19 percent had smoked cigarettes. The study found that teens using multiple substances reported more physical ailments and symptoms of depression, anxiety or hopelessness and having difficulty sleeping.

In addition, these adolescents reported more high-risk behaviors. Dr. Kevin Conway, the study's lead author from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, said the study had several important findings. "First, the results show that there are multiple types or subgroups of adolescent substance users who differ in terms of use patterns, somatic complaints, and depressive symptoms. Second, one subgroup tended to abuse multiple different substances including marijuana, alcohol, and medications. Third, this same group also reported the highest levels of somatic complaints and depressive symptoms.

Together, these findings implicate polysubstance use as a broad indicator of severity deserving research and clinical attention," he explained. Conway, NIDA's Deputy Director of the Division of Epidemiology, Services, and Prevention Research, said that the high-risk profile of the polysubstance users indicates a need for mental health and substance use screening and referral. "This indication is one of the most important and actionable findings of this study," he told CADCA.

For some, one time or infrequent use of alcohol or drugs can result in tragedy: alcohol overdose (alcohol poisoning), an accident or fall when under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or an arrest associated with alcohol or drugs that may cost you your reputation and/or your freedom. For others, even though they may not use alcohol or drugs, they could become a victim of an alcohol or drug-related crime. And, for yet others, what may have started as occasional use can turn into an addiction that presents extraordinary health concerns with potentially grave and tragic consequences. To learn more about Alcohol, Drugs and Youth, click here.