

# reality CHECK! #1

## Strange items now part of drug paraphernalia



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**K**nowledgeable and alert parents may assume that they know what to look for if they suspect teen drug use. But do they? Parents might never question such odd items as popsicle sticks or dust masks and yet both items may signal the use of club drugs like Ecstasy.

Other warning signs of Ecstasy use may include a variety of unusual products.

**Medicated vapor rubs or inhalers** are used to heighten sensations created while under the influence of Ecstasy. The substance is often inhaled through a dust mask or blown into the eye using an empty tampon tube.

**Retainers or pacifiers** are used to counteract the jaw clenching and teeth grinding caused by Ecstasy.

**Blow pops, popsicles, and lollipops** also are used to counteract jaw clenching.

**Large water bottles** are often taken to parties where Ecstasy will be consumed. Teens need constant hydration when using Ecstasy because it makes users extremely thirsty and dehydrated.

**Glow sticks** are used to heighten the mild hallucinogenic effect of Ecstasy.

**5-HTP** is taken as a supplement to offset Ecstasy-induced depression on the day after use.

Other club drugs, including Gammahydroxy-butyrate, or GHB, have their own telltale paraphernalia

ranging from "red eye" drops, spring water, containers of children's bubbles and windshield washer fluid.

Experts note that the Internet has opened a major avenue for the sale of traditional drug paraphernalia as well as some new and unusual items. Distributors often target children



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in their marketing schemes, using cartoon characters and other gimmicks to entice young buyers.

Items are specifically designed to appeal to youth with marijuana pipes disguised as common objects such as highlighter markers, lipstick and flashlights. Federal officials note that high school principals have been

confiscating these types of items.

As health educators, we applaud the federal government's new crackdown on drug paraphernalia. The U.S. Attorney's office and the Drug Enforcement Administration have begun confiscating thousands of tons of drug paraphernalia worth tens of millions of dollars.

Describing marijuana as the drug that teenagers are most at risk to abuse, John Walters, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, recently said that eliminating the drug paraphernalia market was as important as treatment and prevention in curbing drug use among young people.

We agree with law-enforcement officials who criticize distributors of drug paraphernalia for their roles in the illegal drug trade and said they shared responsibility for



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the violence it accompanies. They are in essence no different than drug dealers.

We need to be vigilant both in recognizing and eliminating traditional drug paraphernalia as well as in identifying when household items are being adapted for the use of illegal drugs. With parental awareness of the new drug paraphernalia hopefully will come recognition of when intervention has become necessary.

