Brace for new addictive drug

As if parents don’t have enough to worry about, there will soon be a new drug in town. It’s called “crack.” Crack is a form of cocaine that has been described by drug experts as one of the most addictive drugs ever produced. It is 75 percent cocaine, usually mixed with baking soda and water to create a paste.

That paste is then dried and cut into chips. A small chip, which is selling in other parts of the country for $10-15, can give a 20 to 30 minute high. It is usually smoked in a water pipe.

A COMMENTARY

The newest member of the drug family recently came to the attention of Lafayette residents who picked up a copy of the March 17th edition of Newsweek. It’s cover story is entitled “Kids and Cocaine.”

The article points out that crack has many qualities that make it almost irresistible for not only adults, but young people as well.

It’s cheap. It’s small and easy to hide. It gives a rush like no other, certainly more intense than cocaine which is snorted, according to the article.

One of the most frightening aspects about the drug is that it is highly addictive. One drug expert is quoted in Newsweek as saying it is “almost instantaneous addiction.” Other forms of cocaine use take much longer for addiction.

So when will crack be in Lafayette? Sooner than anyone would like.

One law enforcement officer told The Advertiser it usually takes 12 to 18 months for a drug users to develop an addiction to crack. The first sign the user may have is when the habit begins to take more of a financial burden on their family. The drug cost and the need for more of it makes the user turn to crime.

Kathleen Thames

But one local substance abuse counselor said crack is already closer and is an epidemic in Houston elementary schools.

Another was realistic. “If it’s in Houston, it’s in Lafayette,” she said.

What can parents do to cope with a drug such as crack? What can Lafayette do?

Those questions were posed by The Advertiser to Seamus Doyle, a substance abuse counselor with Cypress Hospital’s adolescent unit.

His first suggestion was to put a full-time substance abuse counselor at each school.

There are now only two full-time substance abuse counselors in the parish school system.

Doyle pointed out that school counselors now do a good job, but that a counselor who handles nothing but substance abuse would be beneficial at every school.

In such a tight economy, school officials might grip their empty pockets and groan at that suggestion.

But it could effectively be a part of the “Adopt A School Program” which has been successful so far and which has been supported by the Chamber of Commerce.

Businesses or parents’ groups could raise the money to hire a counselor at an “adopted” school. Doyle also suggested that priests and pastors counsel that substance abuse is more than a moral issue; it should be treated as a disease.

He points out that juveniles often have a different sense of morality than adults, although youth’s value system is important.

Doyle stressed that there is still a lot of denial in Lafayette. Parents deny that their kids could get hooked on dope, for instance. Some school officials may deny there is a serious drug problem in schools.

He suggested that parents, especially, should stop denying the fact that their child might have a drug problem. At the first sign of problems, such as a change in a child’s behavior, parents should seek help and tell, not ask, the child to get help.

One aspect about drug addiction cannot be denied: it creates more addiction. Anyone hooked on drugs must make sure they can get the next hit. So they steal or take an easier route - they deal drugs to their friends. They hook others, often by giving away free samples for a while.

With a highly addictive drug such as crack, the problem can spread faster than cancer.

The Newsweek article makes a good point: “In the bleak view of many experts, drug use will persist among young Americans as long as adult America condones it - and adult America, they say, tacitly accepts drugs in many forms, cocaine included.”

Lafayette parents can’t solve the country’s drug problems.

But they can decide not to accept drugs in any form.

They can start in their own homes and neighborhoods to steer kids away from a nightmare from which they may never wake up.