

Pop Lyric Faves: Drugs and Alcohol

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The December death of hit rapper [Pimp C](#) (a.k.a. Chad Butler) was an accident caused in part by the narcotic cough syrup he rapped about. So ruled the [Los Angeles County](#) coroner last week. What he might have added: If we stopped every musical artist who rapped or sang about drugs, the airwaves would be much quieter.

One-third of the most popular songs of 2005 contained explicit references to drug or alcohol use, report [University of Pittsburgh](#) researchers in the February edition of the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine. There's no reason to believe that percentage has since dropped, they say.

With 35 drug and alcohol references per hour of song, teenagers hear about smoking, drinking, snorting and shooting up 84 times on an average day, the study found. They might also hear about slugging codeine-laced cough medicine, Pimp C's drug of choice.

Most raps songs analyzed -- 77 percent -- portrayed drug and alcohol use. Country tunes were a distant second at 36 percent, while 14 percent of rock songs and 9 percent of pop songs mentioned mind-altering substances.

"Whereas rap had a lot of marijuana and alcohol, country music had a lot of alcohol but no marijuana," says pediatrician Brian Primack, who led the study.

His team linked about half of the musical drug references to sex and partying, while only a few songs -- all rock -- doled out anti-drug messages.

Primack launched the analysis after other research found that on-screen smoking can prompt teens to light up cigarettes. Primack is now beginning a long-term study to determine whether drug-heavy lyrics likewise influence teen behavior.

-- **Brian Vastag**

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