

# Substance Use Information

## Definition

- Information on substance use.
- Includes facts, myths, health risks, prevention, and trusted resources.

## Health Information

### Overview

- There are many drugs (substances) that people use to change their mood or feel "high."
- Many of these substances are illegal. Some are prescription drugs that are misused.
- The most used drug is alcohol.
- Other common drugs are marijuana (cannabis) and nicotine (vaping or smoking).

### Types and Symptoms

- **Stimulants.** Called "uppers." Amphetamines, cocaine, and caffeine. They cause increased alertness, anxiety, rapid heartbeat, sweating, or aggressive behavior.
- **Sedatives.** Called "downers." Alcohol, benzodiazepines, and opioids. They cause relaxation, sleepiness, and shallow breathing. For more information, see the Alcohol Use or Opioid Use handouts.
- **Hallucinogens.** LSD, ecstasy, hallucinogenic mushrooms. They cause altered senses or mood. They make you see or hear things that aren't there (hallucinations). For more information, see the Hallucinogenic Mushroom handout.

## Care Advice

### 1. Key Points

- There are many different drugs people use to feel "high." Many are illegal.
- It's important to understand the health risks of these drugs.
- Here's some information that can help.

### 2. Health Risks

- Frequent substance use has many harmful health risks.
- **Drug dependence and addiction.** Many substances are addictive. It becomes hard to quit using them.
- **Learning problems.** People who use drugs are more likely to drop out of school.
- **Mental health problems.** Substance use worsens depression and anxiety.
- **Injuries.** Car accidents, overdose deaths, dating violence, and suicide.
- **Legal problems.** Substance use can lead to being arrested or jail time.
- **Serious infections.** Using injected drugs can cause HIV (AIDS).

### 3. Myths About Substance Use

- **"Prescription medicines aren't addictive."** Prescription medicines, such as opioids and benzodiazepines, can be addictive. The more you use them, the more addictive they are.
- **"Plants like hallucinogenic mushrooms and marijuana are safe because they are natural."** Even though it's a plant, it can still be harmful.
- **"Some substances make driving safer."** Substances affect your judgment, reaction time, and coordination. This makes driving dangerous.
- **"Trying a drug to get high just once is safe."** You don't know the strength of the drug you bought off the street. It only takes one pill to kill you.

### 4. Accidental Ingestion in Children: Prevention

- Only use medicines as prescribed. Don't share them with other people.
- Keep medicines in their original packaging. Store them locked up and out of reach.
- When finished with your medicine, dispose of leftovers at a pharmacy, hospital or police station.

### 5. Substance Use and Teens: Prevention

- Talk to your teen about substance use. Start discussions before age 14.
- Set clear rules and expectations about substance use. Avoid lecturing or anger.
- Share the risks of substance use. Remind them it can keep them from doing their best in school and sports. Share how dangerous it is to drive after using drugs.
- Support your teen in making good choices. Let them know it's fine to say no or walk away.
- Talk about ways they can resist peer pressure. Brainstorm or role play with them. Help them find the right words to say no.
- Help them stay away from people and places with substance use. Tell them you will always give them a ride home.
- Listen to your teen's questions about substance use. If you can't answer them, use one of the resources below.

### 6. Trusted Substance Use Resources

- **National Substance Abuse Hotline.** 1-800-662-4357.
- **Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.** Provides a list of addiction treatment helplines. <https://www.ccsa.ca/treatment-support-and-recovery>.
- **National Poison Center.** 1-800-222-1222.

## Call Your Doctor If

- You are concerned about your teen's substance use
- You are concerned about your own substance use.
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

### Pediatric Care Advice

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