

Teaching Tool

Grade 6 - Be drug-free

Core knowledge content

What are Drugs?

- Drugs are substances that can affect the way a person thinks, acts and/or feels.
- Some drugs are considered legal in Canada while others are classified as illegal. Possession or distribution of illegal drugs may result in legal consequences such as arrests, prison time, fines, etc. However, any drug, whether it's legal, illegal, prescription or over the counter, can result in negative health outcomes.
- Some common substances we may have in our homes may also act as drugs. Intoxicating substances may include gasoline, glue or mouthwash. When these types of substances are misused (ie. Ingested or inhaled) they can act like drugs and again, produce negative health outcomes.
- People start using drugs for many reasons, i.e., peer pressure to fit in, to cope with stress etc.
- Individual safety is at risk: walking , riding your bike under the influence, or as a passenger in a car with an impaired driver
- We tend to overestimate the number of people taking these drugs. The percentage of grade 7 students taking drugs is only a small fraction of the total population.
- Initiation of alcohol, cannabis, tobacco and other drug use increases with age.
- People may become addicted to drugs and it is very difficult to quit
- Continuum of drug use:

Level of use	Key features
Non-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never used a drug
Experimental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curious about effects of drug; used several times
Irregular/ Occasional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infrequent use; special occasion• When opportunities are available

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Level of use	Key features
Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular use • Seeks opportunities to use drug(s) • Friends are “doing it” • Feels “in control” of drug use
Dependent (Addiction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addiction is a physiological and psychological dependence • Craving • Loss of control of amount or frequency of use • Compulsion to use • Use despite consequences

Tobacco

- Tobacco can be smoked in the form of cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos, hookah (consists of a glass base that is partially filled with water)
- Tobacco also comes in smokeless tobacco products which are typically broken down into two categories: chewing tobacco and snuff/snus (pronounced “snoose”)
 - Chewing tobacco is shredded, twisted, or bricked loose leaf tobacco. It is placed in the mouth, between the cheek and lower lip. It is occasionally chewed. The resulting tobacco juices/saliva is typically spit out.
 - Snuff/snus is fine-grain tobacco. Snuff can also be placed between the gum and cheek or lower lip, while snus is typically placed between the gum and upper lip. Snuff/snus does not need to be spit out.
- Nicotine is the drug in tobacco that is addictive
- Legal age to purchase tobacco products is 19 years of age and older
- Negative consequences for using tobacco products include:
 - Yellow teeth
 - Bad breath
 - Cough

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- Cost a lot of money
- Some friends don't want to hang out with you
- Decreases exercise tolerance because of the decreased oxygen to the body (one cannot do sports as easily)
- Lung damage
- Increased risk of heart attack, stroke, and addiction

Electronic Cigarettes (Vapes)

- Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), commonly referred to as “vapes”, use a battery, heating element and liquid containing cartridge (e-liquid or e-juice) to create an aerosol or vapour. The cartridges come in different flavours which may be appealing to young people.
- In Canada, e-cigarettes without nicotine are considered legal; however, Health Canada warns that they have not been fully checked for safety or quality. In fact, some cartridges that have been labeled as nicotine-free actually contain nicotine. Different cartridges may contain different amounts of nicotine. E-cigarettes containing nicotine are readily available in Canada and online.
- Electronic cigarettes may be perceived as being less harmful than cigarettes, but there are still risks. Many cartridges contain nicotine and the aerosol contains other chemicals that may be harmful. Injuries have been reported from exploding batteries in electronic cigarettes.

Alcohol

- Alcohol is a depressant that slows down the brain and central nervous system, heart rate and breathing rate.
- Relaxes the body.
- Impairs judgment; increasing your risk of making bad choices.
- Examples of alcohol: wine, beer, liquor etc.
- Alcohol content in a glass of wine (5oz) is equal to a shot of liquor (1½ oz) is equal to a bottle of beer (12 oz). This is based on typically alcohol percentages but some beers, wines or spirits may have higher alcohol percentages.
- Binge drinking is defined as drinking 5 or more drinks in one sitting for males, or 4 or more drinks for a female. This increases the risk of alcohol poisoning.

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- Alcohol poisoning happens as a result of drinking too much in too short of time. It is more important to call 911 immediately than worrying if the person will get into trouble with their parents. If the person passes out he/she may choke on their vomit so it is important to turn the person on their side and do not leave them alone. Paramedics care about saving your life.
- Too much alcohol can lead to coma and death.
- Caffeine and cold shower do not make a drinker sober. Only time will take away the effects. Depending on how much a person drinks, it can take several hours before the effects are gone.
- 12% of grade 7 and 8 students rode in a vehicle with someone who had used drugs before driving in the past 12 months (OSDHUS, 2015).
- 18% of grade 7 and 8 students reported drinking more than a sip of alcohol in the past 12 months (OSDHUS, 2015).
- 32% of grade 7 and 8 students think it is easy to get alcohol (OSDHUS, 2015).
- 34% of grade 7 -12 students think that there is no risk or a slight risk from drinking 5 or more drinks once or twice each weekend (OSDHUS, 2015).

Cannabis (Marijuana)

- Is a hallucinogenic drug which comes from the cannabis plant which grows in many parts of the world.
- Contains THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) which is the active chemical that affects how you think, feel and act.
- More powerful today than it was in the past because growers have developed strains which contain more THC.
- Contains toxins and cancer-causing chemicals that can be stored in the body fat for months.
- Can be habit-forming (addictive). In general, 5-9% of cannabis users will develop dependence on cannabis. However, this number increases to 17% for individuals who started using cannabis during adolescence. (CCSA, 2015)
- Smoking cannabis may be the most hazardous methods of use because it deposits tar in the lungs, decreases oxygen available to the cells, causes coughing, and increases workload on the heart,

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- Any methods of cannabis use decrease concentration and learning, decrease short term memory and may cause feelings of anxiety and panic. Cannabis use can cause difficulties with memory, thinking and/or attention, and can affect coordination and reaction time. This is what makes activities, such as driving, are even more dangerous when using cannabis.
- Adolescents may be at higher risk for negative effects associated with cannabis use because their brains are still developing; a process that continues until the mid-20s. Individuals who begin using cannabis at a young age (ie. Before age 16) are more likely to develop mental health problems (ie. Psychotic symptoms, schizophrenia). Young users are also at increased risk for poor academic performance, injuries and/or other substance use problems.
- Because youth are at higher risk for negative health effects, Canada's lower-risk cannabis use guidelines (2017) recommend abstaining from cannabis use. For those who choose to use cannabis despite known health risks, it is important to know that the negative effects can be reduced by delaying initiation of cannabis use.
- Recreational cannabis became legal on October 17, 2018. You must be 19 years of age and older to buy, use, grow or possess cannabis.
- Medical cannabis is regulated differently. Some illnesses that doctors would write cannabis prescriptions for include terminal cancer, multiple sclerosis, and glaucoma.
- Illegal grow-ops are unregulated – other drugs can be added to cannabis (i.e., ecstasy, crystal meth).
- 10% of grade 7 and 8 students believe there is no risk or a slight risk of regularly using cannabis (OSDHUS, 2015).
- When grade 7 and 8 students were asked, “Do you disapprove of adults regularly using cannabis?” 94% of students stated they disapprove or strongly disapprove.

Prescription Drugs

- Drugs from pharmacy, when taken properly, (i.e., only by the person they were prescribed for and in the right/proper dose) can make you better or even save your life.
- Even these types of drugs when misused or taken improperly can be very dangerous
- When they are not prescribed to you these drugs become classified as illegal.

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- Examples of prescription drugs that are often misused include: oxycodone, Fentanyl, Ritalin, codeine, morphine, hydromorphone

Why do kids start to use drugs?

- There are many reasons why kids use drugs. Examples may include:
 - help them cope
 - feel cool
 - sense of belonging to a group
 - rebel
 - curiosity
 - media influence

Is there any harm in trying drugs?

- Experimenting with any type of drug can be dangerous.
- Never know how a drug is going to react with our body.
- Drugs can be addictive – remember, people generally do not try drugs with the intention of becoming addicted; however, drug use can progress.
- Those who use drugs more often may choose to hang out with others who choose to use drugs regularly.
- Drug use affects your judgment and increases risk-taking behaviours. This can increase risk of injury.

Addiction

- Physical and psychological dependence.
- Person feels that they crave or absolutely need to have the drug.
- Suffer from loss of control over how much and how often they misuse drugs.
- Will continue to misuse drugs even though there may be consequences.

Addiction is the Presence of the 4 C's:

- **C**raving
- Loss of **C**ontrol of amount or frequency of use
- **C**ompulsion to use

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- Use despite Consequences

Refusal Skills: Tips to saying “NO”...

- It can sometimes be difficult to say no to friends or peers without offending them or feeling singled out.
- Your friend approaches you to give you a beer or cigarette. How do you deal with your friend? How do you refuse the beer or cigarette? Give examples of excuses or alternative answers.
 - avoid the group
 - walk away
 - give reason/excuse i.e., I am in training for track and field
 - suggest an alternative i.e., let's go to the movies
 - Say...“Can you imagine what would happen if my parents found out? No way – I want to live until at least tomorrow”
 - Say...“Respect my decision – I respect yours”
 - Say...“Look I'd rather not”
 - Say...“I'll catch up with you tomorrow – I've got other things I'd like to do”

What is a good friend?

- Someone who accepts you as you are, accepts your decisions, and watches out for you.
- A good friend does not pressure you into doing something you don't want to do.
- Peer influence can be very strong in positive ways.
- Good friends who don't use drugs can keep you from using drugs.
- Friends can recommend people and community resources that can provide support when dealing with choices or situations involving substance use and addictive behaviours.
- What can you do with your friends instead of using drugs or alcohol?

Other Safety Tips

- Safety agreement – consider discussing with your parents (or other trusted adult) a plan to have them pick you up if you do not have a safe ride home. Part of this agreement may be

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that your parents/trusted adult agree to not ask any questions about what happened or delay asking any questions until the next day.

- Texting a code word – this is another type of agreement you may discuss with your parents/trusted adult. If you are stuck in a situation and need to get out of it you could text “X”, or another code of your choice, to your parents/adult. This would let the adult know you need help. They can call you back and make up an excuse for you to leave the situation and arrange a safe ride home.

Where to get help

- Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868)
- [Mental Health Helpline](#) (1-866-531-2600)
- [Community Addictions Services of Niagara](#) (CASON) (905) 684-1183
- Pathstone Mental Health – Crisis Services (1-800-263-4944)
- Al-Anon/Alateen (if you are bothered by someone else’s drinking) 905-328-1677 or 1-888-425-2666
- Parents
- Teacher/Principal/Vice-Principal
- Child and Youth Worker
- Public Health Nurse
- Doctor

Resources

[Government of Canada, National Anti-Drug Strategy](#)

[Government of Ontario – Cannabis Legalization Information](#)

References

[Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse: The Effects of Cannabis use During Adolescence](#)

[Canada’s Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines \(2018\)](#)

[Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey \(2021\)](#)

[Cannabis in Canada—Get the Facts!](#)

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[Current Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Laws – Government of Canada](#)

[Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\) – Mental Illness and Addiction Index](#)

[Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\) – Guides and Publications: Information for Children and Youth](#)

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Supplemental Knowledge

Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (2017)

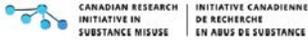
Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG)



Recommendations

- Cannabis use has health risks best avoided by abstaining
- Delay taking up cannabis use until later in life
- Identify and choose lower-risk cannabis products
- Don't use synthetic cannabinoids
- Avoid smoking burnt cannabis—choose safer ways of using
- If you smoke cannabis, avoid harmful smoking practices
- Limit and reduce how often you use cannabis
- Don't use and drive, or operate other machinery
- Avoid cannabis use altogether if you are at risk for mental health problems or are pregnant
- Avoid combining these risks

The LRCUG are an evidence-based intervention project by the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM).



Reference: *American Journal of Public Health*, 2017

The LRCUG have been endorsed by the following organizations:



Talking to Teenagers about Drugs

FAQs from students

If we know drugs are harmful, why do people still use them?

There are many reasons young people start to use drugs (e.g. help them cope, to feel cool, to belong to a group, to rebel, for curiosity, media influences).

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Sometimes people try drugs with no intention of becoming regular users but then become addicted. Once someone is addicted, it is very hard for them to quit, even if they are aware of the negative consequences of continuing to use the drug.

Isn't everyone drinking or using drug(s)?

No. According to the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (2015), 45.8% of students (gr. 7-12) have used alcohol. This means that over half of students have not used alcohol. Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug by this age group and only 21.3% of students have used cannabis. This again shows that the majority of students are not using drugs.

I heard e-cigarettes (vaping) are not harmful. Is that true?

No. All tobacco products have negative health effects, including e-cigarettes. These contain the same chemicals that cause cancer and damage to organs.

Cigarettes are legal, alcohol is legal, and cannabis (marijuana) is now legal. If these things are legal, how can they be bad? If they are bad, why are they legal?

Cannabis became legal October 17, 2018. Now that it is legal, it is regulated similarly to tobacco and alcohol, which are only legal for purchase and use by adults (over 19). Part of the reason for the age restriction is the fact that the negative health effects are worse for younger people.

These drugs are legal because that makes it possible for the government to regulate their production, sale, and consumption. This means that the government will better be able to protect the public, make producing and selling cannabis less profitable for dealers, and make it less available to youth.

I heard cannabis (marijuana) is used as medicine for some people. How can it be bad for you, then?

Cannabis is a drug that can be prescribed to help patients with certain serious medical conditions. Keep in mind any drug (prescribed, legal, illegal, natural, etc.) all have side effects. The doctor and patient must decide together if the benefits of taking a certain medication (like cannabis) outweigh the risks (i.e. the side effects). Any drug, including cannabis, may have serious negative health effects and thus should not be used unless it has been prescribed for a specific health issue

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Questions kids have when a parent drinks

(Adapted from CAMH, *When a parent drinks too much alcohol... What kids want to know*. Retrieved from:

http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/for_children_youth/Pages/when_parent_drinks.aspx)

Why does my mom or dad drink so much?

Lots of people drink alcohol and don't have problems. But this is not true for everyone. There are many possible reasons why someone may have a problem with alcohol, but sometimes the causes are not known. There are also different reasons why people begin drinking too much. At first, people may drink alcohol because it makes them feel better or more relaxed, or because it seems like fun. Some people may gradually begin to drink more, while for others heavy drinking may start more suddenly. In some cases, stress or other mental health problems may lead a person to drink more alcohol. Remember, not all alcohol use is a problem. It ranges from non-problem drinking to addiction.

Can you feel bad when you stop drinking or cut back quickly?

Yes. People who often drink a lot for a period of time, or binge (five or more drinks on one occasion), may feel bad and even experience serious physical effects when they stop drinking or cut down. These are called withdrawal symptoms. They may: feel nervous and jumpy, have sleep problems, have tremors (the "shakes"), have seizures, have hallucinations (think they hear or see things that aren't really there).

What does it feel like to drink alcohol? How does it feel to be drunk?

Alcohol is a drug. It affects a person's body and how he or she feels and behaves. People who are drunk may have many different feelings. They may feel dizzy, silly, happy or free to act however they want. Or they may feel out of control, angry, violent, sad, tired or nauseous (feel like vomiting). After drinking a lot, people may have trouble remembering, talking, standing, walking or doing other tasks. People may also vomit (throw up), fall down, feel ill (have a "hangover") or black out (when they can't remember what happened).

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Why am I so confused about how I feel? Why do I worry so much?

If someone in your family drinks too much alcohol, things at home might not feel calm or safe. The alcohol problem can make family relationships tense, which can cause arguments. When you are worrying about what is going on, it may be hard to concentrate at home and at school.

The parent with the alcohol problem may say things that he or she doesn't mean. Your mom or dad may break promises. There may not be a regular schedule at home (for example, meals may not be on time). You may feel unhappy, or may be embarrassed to bring friends home. All this stress can cause confusing feelings. All these feelings are normal. Even scary feelings are OK.

Why is the alcohol problem a secret?

It doesn't have to be a secret but sometimes people don't want to let others know about their alcohol problem. They may worry that others will think badly of them and treat them differently. This is sometimes called "stigma" or "discrimination." Drinking is often seen as something that people should be able to control, or to stop if they want to. People may worry that others would see them as "weak" if they admitted having an alcohol problem. People may also worry that if they admit they have a problem, it may lead to other problems (for example, that it may make them lose their job, scare family members or make others think they are a bad parent).

Sometimes kids think that if they talk about their mom or dad's drinking problem, they will get their parent in trouble. They may also worry about getting in trouble themselves. Kids might feel that their family is different from others (for example, there may be a lot of arguing, the house may be a mess or the parent may often be sleeping on the couch). A child might be embarrassed by what is going on at home, and not want anyone to know about it.

Can my mom or dad stop drinking so much? Can people get better?

Yes. The good news is that people with alcohol problems can get better. However, it can be really hard to stop drinking. A person may take a long time to change. Or they might change for a while, but then have a day or week when they start drinking again. This is called a "relapse," and it is often part of getting better. It doesn't always mean the person won't ever stop.

Is there anything I can do to make my mom or dad better?

Many kids worry about the parent with the alcohol problem. Family support is really important for people with a drinking problem. Kids can let their parent know they care about them and want them to get better, but ultimately it is the adults who are responsible for being the "helpers," not the kids. Sometimes the parent may blame others for his or her drinking. But kids are not the

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cause of their parent's drinking problem, no matter what is going on at home. The child can't control or cure the problem.

Why do people drink so much when they know it will hurt them or others?

When people have an alcohol problem, they may lie and say things they don't mean, which can really hurt people's feelings. People may not admit the bad things that are happening in their lives (either to themselves or to others) because of their drinking. When someone is drunk, his or her judgment is off, or "impaired." The person may do dangerous things, such as driving or getting into fights. People with a drinking problem believe alcohol will help them feel better or forget about their other problems. People who drink too much usually only focus on what is happening right now. They do not think about what may happen later or in the long term. They may not be able to understand what is really going on in their lives. People who have been drinking too much for a long time may drink to avoid feeling ill. They may feel ill if they stop drinking or drink less, and this feels worse in the short term.

When I grow up, will I have an alcohol problem too?

It's natural to worry about this. Some scientists think that kids may be more likely to have an alcohol problem if a parent does. But this is not certain, and most kids will not follow in their parent's footsteps and have a drinking problem. Most adults drink responsibly and don't develop alcohol problems. Kids are able to make different choices. It helps if kids know the risks. They can get support to help them make different choices than their parent did.

What can I do so that I don't ever have an alcohol problem?

There are a lot of things kids can do. Joining clubs, playing sports and hanging out with friends are all great ideas. So is spending time with other adults who don't have problems with alcohol (for example, sports coaches, teachers and other grown-up relatives). It's important for kids to find something they enjoy and to spend a lot of time doing it. It's good to spend time with other kids who like to play sports and do fun and healthy things (for example, ride bikes, play in the playground, do arts and crafts, and play on the computer). These are all great ways to cope with stress, sadness, and ups and downs. Kids should also find things they like to do alone, for when they can't leave the house or find someone to play with. For example, they can read, write stories, play music or watch TV. They can also talk to a friend on the phone.

If kids have their own dreams and goals, they are less likely to have an alcohol problem. Adults can help kids work toward goals. It's important for kids to have a relationship with at least one caring adult. When things in the family are going well, it's a good idea for kids to join in family

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celebrations and rituals. These can be small things, like eating dinner together, watching a TV show together or celebrating birthdays and holidays together in a special way. This is important for kids, even when not everyone in the family is there.