

Physical & Health Education 10

Legal Aspects and Current Trends in Substance Use and Abuse

Name: _____

Date: _____

Medicinal drugs play a very important role on our society. Modern medicine relies on these drugs every minute of every day to save lives. Medicinal drugs can either be prescribed by a doctor or purchased without a prescription at a pharmacy or drugstore. Prescription drugs are those that are prescribed by a doctor to treat a variety of symptoms and conditions such as the common cold, pain, inflammation, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart conditions, depression, and many more. They are drugs that have specific purposes and should be taken in specific amounts (dosage) to achieve the desired effect. Taking too little or not at the right times will reduce the effectiveness of the drug, while taking too much or too often usually results in adverse short- or long-term effects. Prescription drugs are prescribed for, and are intended to be taken by a specific individual and should therefore never be taken by a person for whom they were not prescribed.

During adolescence, drugs may be offered to you. Will you take an aspirin for your headache? What choices will you make when it comes to alcohol or tobacco? What will influence your decisions if you are confronted with the chance to try an illegal drug like marijuana?

Drugs may be used by people for many reasons: medication, stress relief, curiosity or experimentation, peer pressure, desire to be part of a group, a sense of relaxation and pleasurable euphoria, or as a way of easing physical or emotional pain. The choices you make can have a wide range of positive or negative consequences.

Substance Classification

- **Club Drugs:** The use of psychoactive drugs (a substance that changes brain function, resulting in temporary changes in perception, mood, consciousness, or behaviour) may be used for recreational rather than medical or spiritual purposes. The term "club drugs" has been used in the past to refer to drugs primarily used by young adults at dance clubs and raves. Club drugs are still widely used and available in these settings, but are also appearing in other social settings within our communities, such as in bars, on college campuses, and at high school parties or gatherings. Club drugs often appear at events for young adults that are advertised as "non-alcoholic functions" in which parents assume the attendees will be supervised and safe. Club drugs include, but are not limited to, MDMA (aka Ecstasy), LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), methamphetamine, GHB (Gama Hydroxybutyric Acid), Ketamine, and Rohypnol. Other drugs or substances such as marijuana and alcohol are also popular at clubs or raves.

Club drugs are classified into three areas:

1. Stimulants: drugs that speed up body functions such as heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, etc. (ex. cocaine, nicotine, caffeine)
2. Depressants: drugs that slow down body functions (ex. alcohol, sleeping pills, painkillers)

3. **Hallucinogens:** drugs that both speed up and slow down body functions. Drugs that change the way a person experiences things like touch, taste, smell, sense of time, speed, and distance. May cause people to hear and see things that are not really there (ex. LSD, Magic Mushroom)

These drugs are very dangerous because of their effects on a person's ability to function properly both physically and mentally. How and where the drug was manufactured and who is selling them adds to the danger because the drug could also include other substances.

- **Non-prescription medication:** This form of medication can be sold legally without a doctor's prescription and is available in pharmacies and most large grocery stores. The most common non-prescription medication is for pain relief, and for the symptoms of the cold or flu.
- **Prescription Drug:** This is a licensed medicine that is regulated by legislation to require a prescription before it can be obtained. Below are the three categories of prescription drugs:
 1. **Narcotics:** Such as Codeine, Vicodin and Percocet. Also known as analgesics or opioids are drugs that are prescribed for moderate to severe physical pain. They are abused because they cause tolerance (need more of the drug for the same effect) and dependence and the withdrawal symptoms are severe.
 2. **Depressants:** Such as Xanax, Valium and Librium. They are drugs that are prescribed to treat anxiety and sleep disorders. They are abused because of their sedating properties. With abuse, depressants cause tolerance and dependence and the withdrawal symptoms can be severe.
 3. **Stimulants:** Such as Ritalin, Dexedrine and Meridia. They are prescribed to treat ADD/ADHD and other conditions such as asthma. They are abused because of their energizing and euphoric effects. Stimulants do not generally cause tolerance or dependence but abuse is associated with hostility and paranoia. There is also great risk for cardiovascular failure and seizures.
- **Alcohol:** Alcohol is legal depressant, a liquid obtained by the fermentation of carbohydrates by yeast or by distillation. There are many different types of alcohol, but Ethanol (ethyl alcohol) is the type of alcohol that is used to make alcoholic beverages.
- **Tobacco:** the product manufactured from the leaf of various plants and used in cigars and cigarettes, snuff, and pipe and chewing tobacco. Nicotine is one of more than 4,000 chemicals found in tobacco smoke and is the primary component that acts on the brain. Smokeless tobacco products such as snuff and chewing tobacco also contain high levels of nicotine as well as other toxins.
- **Anabolic Steroids:** Anabolic steroids are any drugs or hormonal substances chemically and pharmacologically related to testosterone (other than estrogen, progesterin, and corticosteroids), that promote muscle growth. Most illicit anabolic steroids are sold at gyms, competitions and through mail-order operations.

Addiction

Addiction is defined as a dependence on a substance (ex. nicotine, alcohol) to the extent that a strong physiological and/or psychological need is established, despite the harmful consequences to self and others. You may know someone who smokes and finds it very hard to quit even though they are aware of the severe consequences associated with the habit. This is because they may be addicted to the

nicotine in the cigarettes.

Some people may be more prone to drug addiction than others and there may be genes that predispose certain people to addiction. Some people experiment with drugs such as alcohol and marijuana and either do not realize or disregard the potential hazards associated with their use. Sometimes the use of one drug will lead to the use of other more powerful and potentially dangerous drugs such as "speed", LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), and PCP (phencyclidine), cocaine and heroin. It is important to always be aware that experimentation can turn into use or abuse without any obvious signs.

It is also important to realize that addiction often has social and emotional consequences such as:

- low self-esteem
- emotional distress
- family problems (ex. abuse, divorce)
- loss of friends
- job loss
- participation in crime to support the addiction

The harm from chemical dependency (addiction) should be measured not just in how the addiction harms the body (the physical effects), but also in the way it affects mental health (the psychological effects), and social health - your family and work environment. A person may lose old friends (non-drug users) and end up making new friends (drug users) that may be a bad influence on them.

How does addiction affect a person's mind?

Addiction usually disturbs a person's perceptions and attitudes and can disrupt their personality. One reason would be that substances such as alcohol, nicotine, cocaine, heroin, and Valium interfere with the natural chemistry of the brain. Another reason is that the experience of addiction has an effect on a person's thinking and feeling. An addiction such as smoking may not have the same harmful social consequences on relationships as other substances might, but the addiction can be just as powerful.

Complete 'Impact of Substance Abuse' activity. Keep it in your PE Journal.

Legal Consequences

Experimentation during the teenage years may occur, and may include alcohol and drugs. Unfortunately, teenagers often do not link their immediate actions with the potential long-term consequences. Teenagers sometimes feel indestructible and immune to the problems that others may have experienced.

Legally available drugs include alcohol, prescribed medications, inhalants (fumes from glues, aerosols, and solvents), caffeine pills, energy drinks, and over-the-counter cough, cold, sleep and diet medications. Even though these drugs and substances can be legally purchased by some individuals, some are restricted to others due to their age. For example, in British Columbia you cannot buy or consume alcohol until you are 19 years of age.

The most commonly used illegal drugs are marijuana (pot), stimulants (cocaine, crack and speed), LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), PCP (phencyclidine), opiates (opium and heroin), and designer or club drugs (Ecstasy).

Download and Complete 'Legal Brainteaser Scenario' activity.

Download and Complete 'Refusal Statements' activity.

Download and Complete 'Effects of Alcohol and Drugs' activity.

Download and Complete 'Substance Use and/or Abuse Prevention Strategy' assignment.