

9th GRADE: SUBSTANCE USE

LESSON 2 OVERVIEW



The Harmful Effects of Drugs and Alcohol



Lesson Time:
30 Minutes

Materials Provided:

- Lesson Slides [Download](#)

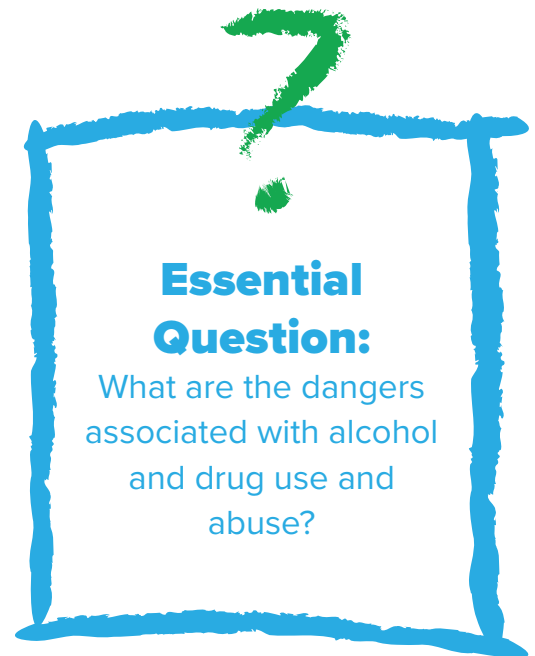
Materials Needed:

- Projector with Video/Audio Capability

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

1. Understand the legal, health, and social consequences of drug and alcohol use.
2. Define substance abuse.
3. Recognize the higher risk of addiction to alcohol and drugs due to early exposure.
4. Identify the risks of drug poisoning/overdosing with prescription and illicit drug use and abuse.



The Harmful Effects of Drugs and Alcohol



Lesson Introduction: (1 minute)

In our previous lesson, we explored some of the risk factors that contribute to youth alcohol and drug use. We also talked about refusal techniques. Refusing can be hard sometimes, especially for 9th graders who are often pressured by older students. Please remember your refusal plan. Planning ahead with good refusal skills is essential to protecting yourself now and in the future.

Slide/Handout



Lesson Script/Talking Points

Slide 1: Reasons to Refuse – Harmful Effects (5 minutes)

In the beginning, substance use may seem like a personal choice, but it permeates into every fiber of a person's being. It affects a person's body, brain, emotions, relationships, grades, hobbies, finances, safety, and much more. Being educated about the dangers of substance use is the best way to arm yourself with reasons to refuse. We will begin our lesson today by exploring the health, social, and legal consequences of substance use and abuse.

Health:

How can substance use affect a person's health?

- Slows down body and brain development
- Damages the liver, lungs, and pancreas
- Leads to cancer or stroke
- Causes serious dental problems
- Increases mental disorders
- Leads to addiction
- Potential to cause drug poisoning - Many people have died due to accidental overdoses of substances.

Social:

How can substance use affect a person socially?

- People often lie in an attempt to cover up their substance use or abuse and this causes a lack of trust with friends and family.
- The effects of drugs cause people to be less responsible because the drugs become more important to them than anything else. This can lead to lower grades, school drop-out, and loss of jobs.
- People who are under the influence of substances are more likely to become violent and participate in risky behavior.
- Sadly, people who use and abuse alcohol and drugs are more likely to have problems with their family and friends.

Legal:

How can substance use affect a person legally?

- Arrest for underage drinking
- Arrest for drinking under the influence
- Arrest for public intoxication
- Arrest due to stealing - People who are addicted to substances will do anything to get their fix.
- People who use substances are more likely to be arrested for violence.
- Driving while under the influence can lead to wrecks which can lead to lawsuits and jail time.

Most people think these consequences could never happen to them but be aware that no one is immune to the harsh consequences of substance use.

Core Lesson (cont)

Slide/Handout



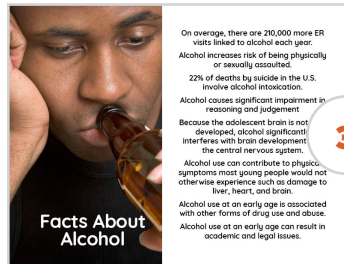
Lesson Script/Talking Points

Slide 2: Risk of Addiction (2 minutes)

Did you know that the earlier you expose your body and your brain to drugs, alcohol, or tobacco products, the more at risk you are of becoming addicted? According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (2024), early experimentation is a strong predictor of addiction. The likelihood of developing a substance use disorder is greatest for those who begin use in their early teens.

KNOW THE FACTS – Specific Drugs

In the next few slides, we will take a closer look at alcohol, marijuana, prescription drugs, and illicit drugs to help you understand the dangerous effects of each drug.



Slides 3 and 4: Facts about Alcohol (5 minutes)

It is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to purchase or drink alcohol. However, due to the ease of accessibility, alcohol is often one of the first substances young people experiment with. Underage drinking is a risk-taking behavior that leads to other risk-taking behaviors. Youth who abstain from drinking alcohol are less likely to experiment with other harmful drugs.

Look at the slide as I read aloud the facts about alcohol.

- There is an average increase of 210,000 alcohol-related emergency department visits each year. (NIH, 2024)
- Alcohol increases the risk of being physically or sexually assaulted.
- 21% of deaths by suicide in the U.S. involve alcohol. (NIH, 2024)
- Alcohol causes significant impairment in reasoning and judgment.
- Because the adolescent brain is not fully developed, alcohol significantly interferes with brain development and the central nervous system.
- Alcohol use can contribute to physical symptoms most young people would not otherwise experience such as damage to the liver, heart, and brain.
- Alcohol use at an early age is associated with other forms of drug use and abuse.
- Alcohol use at an early age can result in academic and legal issues.

Slide/Handout



Did you know that youth who drink alcohol remember 10% less than those who don't drink alcohol?

Unfortunately, alcohol is still the number one most commonly used drug among teens. This is frightening because teens are less likely to recognize potential dangers while drinking, thus resulting in unnecessary injury, assault, accidents, and fatalities. Despite its legality, alcohol is one of the most addictive substances. Since alcohol is legal at the age of 21, it is considered socially acceptable. Alcohol is a depressant drug that impairs the way a person feels and thinks. Drinking alcohol is not something to take lightly. It is something to take very seriously. You need to know that being legal doesn't always mean that a substance is safe.

Core Lesson (cont)

Slide/Handout



Myths About Marijuana

Making it legal will not make more people use it.

Marijuana is not addictive.

Marijuana is better for you than cigarettes.

5



Myths About Marijuana

Vaping THC is not any more dangerous than smoking marijuana.

Marijuana is not harmful.

Marijuana is natural.

Marijuana is medicine.

6

Lesson Script/Talking Points

Slides 5 and 6: Myths About Marijuana (7 minutes)

As we look at this slide, let's talk about myths and facts. Feel free to guess myth or fact as I read each of these. (**IMPORTANT Facilitator note – ALL of the statements are MYTHS. After each myth, read the fact in the detailed notes that follow.**)

- Myth: Making it legal will not make more people use it.** **FACT:** Marijuana is the most commonly used illegal drug (all ages) in the U.S., with approximately 22.2 million users each month. (NIH, 2024) Use has increased each year in states that have legalized marijuana.
- Myth: Marijuana is not addictive.** **FACT:** Research shows that about 1 in 10 marijuana users will become addicted. For people who begin using before the age of 18, that number rises to 1 in 6.
- Myth: Marijuana is better for you than cigarettes.** **FACT:** Marijuana deposits 4x more tar in the lungs than tobacco cigarettes.
- Myth: Vaping THC is not any more dangerous than smoking marijuana.** **FACT:** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is strengthening its warning to consumers to stop using vaping products containing THC amid more than 1,000 reports of lung injuries—including some resulting in deaths—following the use of vaping products.
- Myth: Marijuana is not harmful.** **FACT 1:** Marijuana use directly affects the brain — specifically the parts of the brain responsible for memory, learning, attention, decision-making, coordination, emotions, and reaction time. Developing brains, like those in babies, children, and teens, are especially susceptible to the adverse effects of marijuana. **FACT 2:** Long-term or frequent marijuana use has been linked to an increased risk of psychosis or schizophrenia in some users.
- Myth: Marijuana is natural.** **FACT 1:** It can be genetically altered. The amount of THC in marijuana has been increasing steadily over the past few decades. For a new user, this may mean exposure to higher THC levels with a greater chance of a harmful reaction. Higher THC levels may explain the rise in emergency room visits involving marijuana use. **FACT 2:** It can be nearly impossible to determine if marijuana is laced with another drug or substance. **FACT 3:** Dealers are more likely to lace weed with cheap substances to rip off customers. They may mix it with laundry detergent, perfumes, or tiny shards of glass to enhance the smell, increase the weight, or make the drug seem more potent.
- Myth: Marijuana is medicine.** **FACT:** CBD is the medicinal component of marijuana which people can buy without having to smoke marijuana to gain the medicinal benefits.

Core Lesson (cont)



Slide/Handout



Lesson Script/Talking Points

Slide 7: Drug Abuse (2 minutes)

Drug abuse is the use of illegal drugs or the use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs for purposes other than those for which they are meant to be used, or in excessive amounts. (NCI, n.d.)

Let's first learn the risks involved with illicit drugs. Illicit drugs are defined as drugs with no currently accepted medical use with a high potential for abuse. Some examples are: heroin, LSD, cocaine, marijuana, and ecstasy. (DEA, 2018) These drugs have serious health consequences and are extremely dangerous. Even the process of obtaining these drugs can be dangerous. The drug cartel is a criminal organization that includes drug lords and hitmen who collude with each other to dominate the illegal drug trade. Drug traffickers and dealers are directly connected to these dangerous organizations. These criminals value money and power more than human life. The risks are too high for purchasing and using illegal drugs. Illicit drugs are not a good or safe choice.

Now let's take a look at prescription drugs. Taking another person's prescription drugs or taking more than what is prescribed by a doctor is more dangerous than you may realize. Taking someone else's prescription drugs is illegal, and it is drug abuse.

The overdose drug rate for adolescents 14-18 years of age continues to increase. You may be surprised to learn that the overdose increase is not due to more illicit drug use. The growing number of overdoses is the result of drugs becoming deadlier due to fentanyl, which is increasingly being found in counterfeit prescription pills. It's very difficult to tell the difference between a real prescription pill obtained from a doctor and a counterfeit pill with a potentially deadly dose of fentanyl. (UCLAHealth, 2024) The presence of fentanyl both in counterfeit pills and in illicit drugs is taking too many young lives. One pill laced with fentanyl has the potential to kill. Never take a pill that isn't prescribed to you by a doctor or purchased from a pharmacy.

Awareness of the severe consequences of drug abuse is the answer to this growing and deadly epidemic. All of the substances we have discussed today can take control of a person quickly. Over the next few years of high school and into adulthood, choose to live a healthy and substance-free life.

Activity: True/False Quiz (7 minutes)

We have discussed quite a bit of information today. Let's check your understanding. I will say a statement and you will tell me if the statement is True or False. As you answer each question, you will have an opportunity to discuss each topic.

1. **Substance abuse causes delinquency.** **TRUE** – It can lead to increased poor decision-making and high-risk behaviors.
2. **I can't get hooked on marijuana or alcohol if I just try it once.** **FALSE** – Some people get hooked on substances after their first use. In addition, it is not uncommon for youth to experience major consequences of their use the first time they use it. (Some examples include sickness, poor

Core Lesson (cont)



decisions, legal consequences, being grounded, etc.).

3. **The causal link between poor school performance and marijuana use is not well established.** FALSE – All scientific evidence reports that brain pathways and development are altered with drug use, not to mention increasing memory loss.
4. **There is an average increase of 210,000 alcohol-related emergency department visits each year.** (injuries, alcohol poisoning, etc.) TRUE
5. **All use of any illegal drug is considered abuse.** TRUE
6. **Marijuana and vaping are not that bad, so using them won't affect my future if I do them now.** FALSE – As we have already discussed, there are reports now of over 1,000 injuries and 15 deaths related to vaping. Failing a drug test can damage your future, especially your career. Marijuana is illegal still in many states; users can experience some serious penalties if caught. Marijuana also affects motivation level and drive.
7. **Alcohol increases the risk of being physically or sexually assaulted among young individuals who abuse alcohol.** TRUE
8. **21% of deaths by suicide in the U.S. involve alcohol.** TRUE
9. **Marijuana is not addictive.** FALSE – Marijuana is an addictive substance that becomes a regular habit. About 1 in 10 users will become addicted - which is higher among regular smokers. Because of the higher THC levels in marijuana, there is a greater risk for people to develop an addiction.
10. **The adolescent overdose rate continues to increase due to the use of illicit drugs.** FALSE – The increase is the result of drugs becoming deadlier due to fentanyl, which is increasingly found in counterfeit prescription pills.

Closing: Essential Question (1 minute)

What are the dangers associated with alcohol and drug use and abuse? (Allow for responses.)

Today you learned a lot of important information. Knowing the dangers associated with drugs and alcohol will help you to make the best and safest choices for your future. If you or someone you know needs help, please talk to a parent, teacher, school counselor, or a trusted adult.

References:

- About 22 high school age adolescents died each week from overdoses in 2022, driven by fentanyl-laced prescription pills.*
UCLA Health. (2024, January 8).
<https://www.uclahealth.org/news/release/about-22-high-school-age-adolescents-died-each-week>
- Drug scheduling.* DEA. (2018, July 10). <https://www.dea.gov/drug-information/drug-scheduling>
- NCI Dictionary of Cancer terms.* Comprehensive Cancer Information - NCI. (n.d.).
<https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/drug-abuse>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). *Alcohol-related emergencies and deaths in the United States.* National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/alcohol-topics/alcohol-facts-and-statistics/alcohol-related-emergencies-and-deaths-united-states>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2024, May 28). *Cannabis (marijuana) Drugfacts.* National Institutes of Health. <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/cannabis-marijuana>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2024, July 2). *The adolescent brain and substance use.* National Institutes of Health. <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/adolescent-brain-substance-use>

Resources:

- [Addictioncenter.com](https://www.addictioncenter.com)
- [Absoluteadvocacy.org](https://www.absoluteadvocacy.org)
- [Alcohol.org](https://www.alcohol.org)
- [Alcoholrehabguide.org](https://www.alcoholrehabguide.org)
- [SAMHSA.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)
- [Drugabuse.gov](https://www.drugabuse.gov)
- [Fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

Click Here to Provide Feedback on this Lesson