

# 8th GRADE: SUBSTANCE USE

## LESSON 2 OVERVIEW

### The Dangers of Drugs, Alcohol & Vaping

**Lesson Time:**

30 Minutes

**Materials Provided:**

- Video: [“Vaping: The Hit Your Brain Takes”](#) (2:19)
- Video: [Just One Pill Can Kill: A Message to Students by Students](#) (2:25)
- Lesson Slides [Download](#)

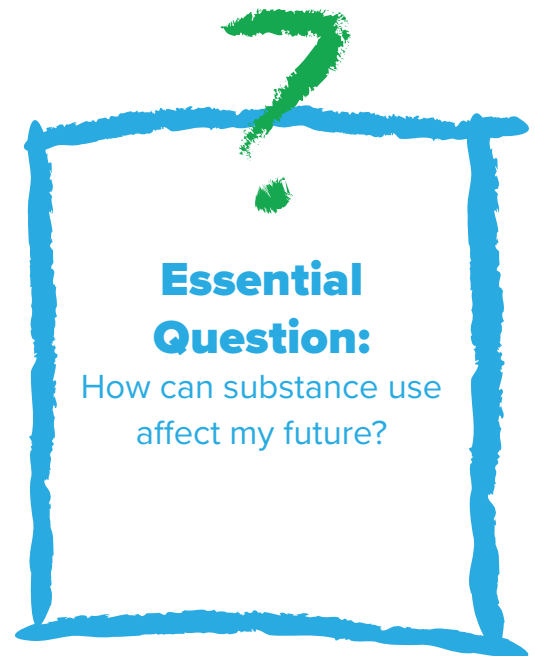
**Materials Needed:**

- Projector with Video/Audio Capability

**Objectives:**

Students will be able to...

1. Identify the dangers of e-cigarettes and vapes.
2. Recognize the effects of alcohol and learn the risks associated with underage drinking.
3. Explore the dangers of prescription and illicit drugs.



# The Dangers of Drugs, Alcohol & Vaping

## Lesson Introduction: (1 minute)

Life is all about choices. Some choices are not as critical as others. For instance, it really isn't a big deal which cookie you pick out behind the glass counter. Either way, you will get a delicious cookie, right? What about making the decision on what to wear to school? That decision, even though it feels important, isn't considered of extreme importance because either way, you arrive at school dressed. As human beings, we make many decisions every day. Thinking about your day, how many decisions do you think you have made so far? (*Allow for response.*) How many decisions do you think the average person makes a day? (*Allow students to guess.*) According to Harvard Business Review, the average adult makes 33,000 to 35,000 decisions a day including what we will eat, what we will wear, what we will say, and how we will say it. (HBR, 2023) Isn't that incredible? That is a lot of decisions, isn't it?

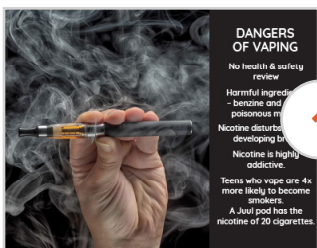
Most of the decisions we make are simple decisions that don't carry a lot of weight. However, we do have to make important decisions at times that come with much heavier consequences. Choosing not to study for a huge math exam or choosing not to do your chores that your parents asked you to do may cause some big consequences. Just like we discussed in the previous lesson, choosing to refuse drugs and alcohol is a very important choice. Choosing to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs can cause major consequences in your life and in the lives of your peers. Today's lesson focuses on the dangers of choosing to use substances.

## Core Lesson: Harmful Effects Slideshow Presentation and Notes (23 minutes)

The first topic that we are going to highlight in this lesson is e-cigarettes/vapes. Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine and nicotine is highly addictive. Many young people are misinformed about vapes and never hear the true facts about its dangers.

Let's first take a look at a video created and distributed by Addiction Policy Forum that discusses the harmful effects vapes have on your brains and bodies. According to the Addiction Policy Forum, this video "debunks or disproves common myths about vaping and boils down the science on the real harms of adolescent e-cigarette use." (APF, 2020) After the video, if you want to learn more, I encourage you to visit [www.addictionpolicy.org](http://www.addictionpolicy.org). The site is full of researched, solid information about the dangers youth face.

## Slide/Handout



## Lesson Script/Talking Points

**Video & Discussion: Vaping: The Hit Your Brain Takes** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aasKIDz9ZX4> (2:19)

What is something you learned from watching this video that you did not already know? (*Allow for responses.*) Here are some of the facts and harmful effects mentioned in the video. Let's read these together.

### Slide 1:

#### Dangers of Vaping

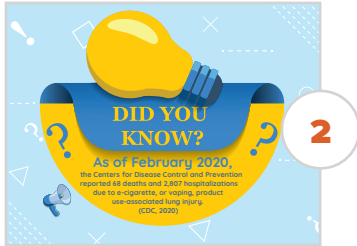
- Vapes have not yet gone through a health and safety review.
- Researchers have found harmful ingredients in these liquids, including flavoring, that are linked to serious lung disease. These include benzene and poisonous metals such as nickel, tin and lead.
- Our brains grow rapidly until mid-twenties; nicotine can disturb this process of development.
- Nicotine is highly addictive, making e-cigarettes difficult to resist and quit. (APF, 2020)
- 10% of middle and high school students use tobacco products and of those 7.7% use e-cigarettes.
- Nearly 1 in 2 students who try vaping continue to vape after their first try. (CDC, 2024)

# Core Lesson (cont)

## Slide/Handout

## Lesson Script/Talking Points

- A young person who vapes is 4 times more likely to smoke cigarettes.
- A single JUUL pod has a nicotine level of 20 cigarettes. That's a whole pack of cigarettes. (APF, 2020)



### Slide 2:

#### Did you know?

Some of these cases even include one 17 year old that had a double lung transplant, altering his plans to go into the military. *(Read slide 2 aloud.)*



### Slide 3:

#### When Vaping Goes Wrong

One such patient, Dylan Nelson, 26, of Burlington, Wisconsin, started feeling sick after taking a couple of hits from a new vape cartridge. The next morning, he went to the hospital and his symptoms got progressively worse throughout the day. By nightfall, his lungs were filling with fluid and doctors had to put him into a medically induced coma. He has since been discharged from the hospital. (NBC News, 2019)

What do you think about when you see the picture of Dylan and hear his story? *(Allow for response.)*

Dylan's story is sad. Don't let this happen to you. Thankfully, legislators, in an effort to protect youth from the negative effects of vaping, have raised the legal age for e-cigarettes and tobacco products to 21. Please don't ever start using tobacco products. The health consequences and the risk of addiction are too high.

Now let's dive into the dangers associated with alcohol. Although legal for people over the age of 21, alcohol is one of the most dangerous substances. It is socially acceptable, and it is a highly marketed product. It may seem as if everyone drinks and some people feel they have to drink in order to fit in. What you don't see in the media or hear about amongst your peers are the terrible consequences of addiction, the harmful effects on major body organs and the brain, or the legal consequences associated with alcohol use.



### Slide 4:

#### Alcohol Know the Facts

Although legal for people over age 21, alcohol is one of the most dangerous substances that costs our country a great deal of money. Many people do not realize how dangerous it can be because it seems to be socially acceptable to drink. Please be aware that beginning at a young age increases the negative effects as well as increases the likelihood of addiction.

- Alcohol is a drug that is classified as a depressant because it slows down brain functioning and neural activity.
- The age of legal consumption is 21 years old.

# Core Lesson (cont)

## Slide/Handout

## Lesson Script/Talking Points

- It significantly affects a person's thinking, judgment, and mood.
- When a person consumes more than the body can handle, they lose coordination and control.
- Drinking a lot over a long time or just a single occasion can damage the heart and cause problems including stroke and high blood pressure. It actually affects every body system. (Addiction Center, 2024)



### Slide 5:

#### What's so Bad about Underage Drinking?

According to SAMHSA (2022), underage drinking is associated with various negative consequences for children. Underage alcohol consumption can also endanger the lives around them.

1. Use Drugs - Frequent binge drinkers are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as using marijuana and cocaine.
2. Get Bad Grades - Children who drink alcohol underage are more likely to suffer academically than their peers who do not drink.
3. Suffer Injury or Death - Each year, close to 5,000 people die from **underage** drinking and 95,000 deaths in the U.S. are attributed to alcohol use every year.
4. Engage in risky sexual behavior - Young people who use alcohol are more likely to be sexually active at earlier ages. This results in many other health problems.
5. Make bad decisions - Drinking leads to risky behavior and decisions people later regret. These could result in legal consequences, health consequences, or even death.
6. Have health problems - Alcohol use can lead youth to developing depression and anxiety disorders. (SAMHSA, 2022)

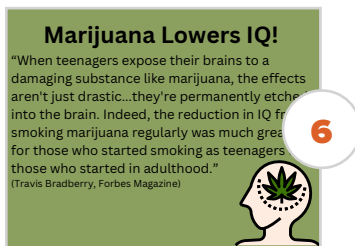
### Slide 6: Marijuana Lowers IQ

Let's take a quick look at marijuana.

Marijuana use can lead to:

- Increased mental health issues
- Lower intelligence
- Breathing problems
- Cancer
- The use of other drugs
- Academic issues
- Risky behavior
- Car accidents
- Social problems (AACAP, 2023)

Would someone like to volunteer to read the next slide? (*Allow a volunteer to read the slide.*) Thank you for reading the slide for us. Wow! Who wants to lower their IQ? You all are too smart to allow this substance to permanently lower your IQ.



### Slide 7: Prescription Drugs

Now let's talk about the most deadly drug problem our country is facing; prescription drugs. Prescription drugs are necessary sometimes for people to get well or to get relief from severe pain. Sadly, many prescription drugs are abused.

# Core Lesson (cont)

## Slide/Handout

## Lesson Script/Talking Points

Taking another person's prescription drug is illegal, dangerous, and deadly.

- It is illegal to take prescription medicines that aren't prescribed to you and that aren't purchased from a licensed pharmacy.
- Criminals are producing high volumes of fake pills and falsely advertising them as legitimate prescription pills. These fake pills are easy to find and are often laced with fentanyl. (DEA, n.d.) A person may purchase a pill they believe is Adderall or Xanax and accidentally overdose on one counterfeit pill. It is almost impossible to identify a counterfeit pill laced with fentanyl.
- Synthetic opioids laced with fentanyl are the leading cause of overdose deaths in the United States. (DEA, n.d.)

Let's watch a quick video to help you see the deadly effects of fentanyl.

Just One Pill Can Kill

<https://youtu.be/C1BgXIYwoVY?si=a7JZ9EPiLtvyMon> (2:25)

This video certainly opens our eyes to the devastation this drug may cause. Fentanyl is killing our teens in America. Be smart. Never take medicine that isn't prescribed to you and purchased from a licensed pharmacist.



## Slide 8: Consequences of Illicit Drug Use

Our last topic today is Illicit Drugs. Some illicit drugs include; Heroin, Marijuana, Cocaine, Ecstasy, and LSD.

Let's look at the slide to see some of the consequences of these illegal drugs.

- Legal Issues
- Imprisonment
- Car Accidents
- Mental Issues
- Damage to the body and brain
- Attendance Issues
- Lower Grades
- Relationship Problems

Don't ever allow anyone to pressure you to try one of these dangerous drugs. You want your life built on a solid foundation full of hope and promise for a bright future. You all have a wonderful purpose, and with good choices, you can do amazing things.

## Closing: Essential Question (1 minute)

**How can substance use affect my future?** (Allow for responses.)

Did you learn anything new in our lesson today? (Allow for response.) What do you think is the most critical issue youth are facing today in regards to substances? (Allow for a few responses; guide discussion to ensure that key elements in the lesson have been grasped by students.) As we discussed, there are many concerns when a young person chooses to experiment with substances. These substances affect your brain development, your decision-making, and can cause some serious health issues or even death. You need to be aware of these facts so that you are informed and can inform others. Choosing to protect your mind and body will always benefit you. The choice is yours. Drugs are a hopeless choice with many negative consequences. Choose to have good health. Choose to have good relationships. Choose to fill your life with good things for a future filled with hope and happiness. If you or someone you know is struggling with drug use, please remember to reach out to a trusted adult for help.

# Core Lesson (cont)



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