

Substances Presentation Guide “Thinking it Through”

Grades 7 and 8

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Objectives

- Clarify substances, their myths, and misconceptions
- Explain the potential effects of substances on the lives of youth
- Provide local and provincial supports and resources

Words matter!

Before your classroom discussion- consider the following tips from [Health Canada](#) :

- **The language you use has a direct and deep impact on people around you.** You can reduce stigma by changing the words you use to talk about drug/substance use. Using kind words can make it easier for someone to speak up, to feel understood or to receive help.
- Use person-first language, for example say 'person who uses drugs/substances' instead of 'drug user'
- Use neutral, medically accurate words when describing drug use

Topic	Instead of	Use
People who use drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• addicts• junkies• users• drug/substance abusers• recreational drug users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• people who use drugs/substances• people with an addiction or substance use disorder• people with lived/living experience

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> people who occasionally use drugs
People who have used drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> former drug addict referring to a person as being 'clean' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> people who have used drugs/substances people in recovery people with lived/living experience
Drug use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> drug/substance abuse drug/substance misuse problematic drug/substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> drug/substance use addiction/substance use disorder drug dependence higher-risk drug/substance use substance use harms

Teacher Speaking Notes

Slide	Notes
1.	Title - Substances: Thinking it Through
2.	Safer Space Guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect yourself and others One person talking at a time Ask questions No using people's names if sharing stories, "someone that I know" Explain what you mean by using words that you know Ask: Are there any other guidelines that you would like to include?
3.	Questions of the day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are substances Myths and Misconception How substances may affect life Sources for support
4.	Substances: What do we mean when we use the term substances? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask: Can you name a few substances? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible answers – alcohol, cocaine, cannabis, etc.

5.	<p>What are substances?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substances are chemicals that change the way our body’s function. • Psychoactive substances are drugs that affect our central nervous system (especially the brain) and make us see, think, feel and behave differently than we usually do. • In Canada, many people think the word “drug” refers only to psychoactive (aka “mind-altering”) substances that are currently illegal, such as cocaine, crystal meth, and mushrooms. But all substances that change the way we think, feel and behave—including many prescription medications—are, in fact, drugs. • Some of the most used drugs are caffeine (in cola, coffee, tea and chocolate), ethanol (in alcohol), nicotine (in cigarettes, cigars and chewing tobacco), and THC (in marijuana and other cannabis products). THC= tetrahydrocannabinol
6.	<p>Substance Use Spectrum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All people, including you and everyone you know will fall somewhere on this spectrum and a person may move back and forth between the stages over time as well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Non–use: is abstinence/avoiding all substances. Examples are no drugs, tobacco or alcohol. ○ Beneficial use: is use of substances that have more positive than negative effects. Examples are taking medications that have been prescribed to you, ceremonial use of tobacco (such as smudging). ○ Lower-risk use: is use of substances that has fewer health effects for the person using or social effects with family, friends and others. Examples are following the low-risk alcohol drinking guidelines or the lower-risk cannabis use guidelines for adults. Youth recommendation is to delay use. ○ Higher-risk use: is use that is harmful resulting in potentially negative effects for the person, their family, friends and others. Examples are use of illegal drugs, impaired driving, binge drinking, combining multiple substances, increased frequency and/or quantity of use. ○ Substance use disorder (addiction): use that is compulsive or difficult to stop despite the negative health and social effects. This is a treatable medical condition that affects the brain. Examples are when someone cannot stop using drugs, alcohol or tobacco even if they want to.

	<p>*It's important to remember that people use substances for different reasons including medical purposes, religious or ceremonial purposes, personal enjoyment, or to cope with stress, trauma or pain.</p>
7.	<p>Trends Graph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first graph shows that from 1977 to 2019 the percentage of students reporting drinking and smoking tobacco cigarettes has been decreasing. While cannabis use has remained relatively steady. • The second graph shows weekly or daily use of electronic cigarettes, or vapes, from 2015 to 2017 to 2019, this rate has been increasing.
8.	<p>Icebreaker Activity:</p> <p>Agree or Disagree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This activity is an opportunity to reflect on your ideas around substances and encourage discussion. You may change your mind and move to another position after hearing someone else's ideas. • Instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We will look at different statements about substances. If you agree with the statements, raise your hand. If you disagree with the statement, leave your hand down.
9.	<p>Agree or Disagree: Using cannabis can put youth at an increased risk for mental health challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health effects of cannabis are more likely when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cannabis use starts at a young age ○ Cannabis is used frequently (daily or almost every day) ○ There is a family or personal history of psychosis and/or schizophrenia ○ Regular cannabis use in adolescences (particularly before age 16) increases the risk of developing psychosis (varies between 4x-12x). This risk depends on factors such as age of initiation, family history of mental health illness and THC content of cannabis.
10.	<p>Agree or Disagree: Young people who drink have more fun.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinking often happens in a social context. It is usually these social situations where bonding and the creation of memories take place. It is typically these aspects of drinking that make it fun but not necessarily the alcohol itself. • What starts off as "fun" can get dangerous and/or risky very quickly. • Young people who drink in excess are at greater risk for harm than those who don't.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alcohol poisoning can occur when drinking alcohol in excess. ○ Can cause respiratory distress (inability to breathe), unconsciousness, and death. ○ Alcohol is a depressant, which can be challenging - especially if a person already experiences a low mood. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It's important to ask yourself if you can have fun without using a particular substance. If the answer is "no", that is always a good time to consider the reasons behind your use and your plan for how you are going to deal with this situation in the long term. Using a substance every time you want to have fun is not a long-term solution. There is a long list of health impacts of using substances that we will be discussing in more detail throughout the presentation.
11.	<p>Agree or Disagree: Vaping is safer for youth to use than cigarettes.</p> <p>Vaping is harmful, and research is beginning to show the negative impacts it can have on your health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not intended for non-smokers including youth (were designed as a cessation aid to help people quit smoking) ● Vaping even for a short time can cause problems such as coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain, mouth or throat irritation, headache, dizziness, light headedness, and nausea. ● Vaping with nicotine is addictive. For some brands of e-liquid, just one pod can contain the same amount of nicotine as 20 cigarettes. ● Vaping with nicotine during adolescence can impact the brain, which continues to develop until approximately age 25. It can negatively impact learning, memory, concentration, and attention. It may worsen symptoms of depression and anxiety, reduce impulse control, and cause behavioural problems. ● Vaping can expose a person to harmful chemicals. The heating process involved in vaping causes the formation of new chemicals (formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, and acrolein), which can cause lung disease and heart disease. Metal contaminants like nickel, tin, and aluminum from the vaping products can also get into the aerosol. Vegetable glycerin and propylene glycol are the main liquids in vaping products and, while they are considered safe to eat, these ingredients have not been tested to see if they are safe to breathe in. ● Sharing vapes can spread viruses and infections. ● Vaping could increase the chances of a young person starting to smoke tobacco cigarettes. Commercial tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Canada. ● Some long-term health effects of vaping may still be unknown. Continuing research is being done on vapes and we may not be aware

	<p>of some of the potential harms yet. It took decades to discover the harms related to smoking (cancers, heart disease, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobacco and Vaping Products Act came out in 2018 by the government to regulate the promotion, selling, packaging, and concentration of tobacco/vaping products. • Ontario has removed all flavours for tobacco and vapes except menthol and tobacco flavour because other flavours (like fruity and dessert flavours) are found to be more favoured by youth. However, there are still unlimited flavours in specialty tobacco/vape shops.
12.	<p>Agree or Disagree: People can use substances without becoming addicted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With long term use, psychological and physical dependence can occur with some people experiencing physical withdrawal if they stop using substances. • Substance use that is compulsive, difficult to stop despite negative health and social effects (needing to use a substance every day in order to function), is called substance use disorder or some people call it an addiction. • People may use drugs without developing a substance use disorder, people may respond and react differently to the same drug and to the same amount of a substance. • Addiction can be complicated and there are many different factors that contribute to whether somebody becomes dependent on a substance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family history ○ Reason for use. A person who uses out of curiosity is less likely to develop a substance abuse disorder than someone using it to cope. ○ Age they first began (the younger the individual, the higher chance of becoming addicted because of brain development) ○ How a substance is used: Ingestion vs inhalation vs injection, as this affects how quickly the substance enters the blood stream and impacts the brain. ○ Environment growing up ○ How addictive the substance is (please see the following statement on estimated risk of developing a substance abuse disorder) • About 9% of people who use cannabis will develop cannabis use disorder, and that number may increase to 16% among those who start using it as teenagers. By comparison, the estimated risk of developing a substance use disorder with other substances is 68% for nicotine, 23% for alcohol, and 21% for cocaine.” (Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, pg.7)

13.	<p>Agree or Disagree: Drinking energy drinks such as red bull, monster energy are a great way to get a burst of energy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy drinks are high in caffeine; some have more caffeine than 6 times the amount of a can of cola <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Compared to the general adult population, children are at increased risk for possible behavioural effects from caffeine. Other risks can include insomnia, headaches, cardiovascular effects, irritability and nervousness. ○ The amount of sugar in energy drinks is similar to that found in cola (10tsp in 355ml can) ○ A “crash” often occurs after consumption when blood sugar and caffeine levels drop and end up below normal ○ Caffeine in youth is not metabolized as efficiently as it is in an adult body. Effects last longer ○ Consumption of caffeine varies depending on the product, you get a lot of caffeine quickly by chugging a can (energy drink/pop), if drinking coffee or caffeinated tea, it is usually sipped (hot) and consumption is over time ○ Health Canada recommends children 10-12 years old consume less than 85mg of caffeine (which equals about two cans of cola) per day. One can of an energy drink contains much more caffeine than the entire recommended daily total. For youth and adults, no more than 400mg of caffeine per day is recommended. (about 3 cups –237ml—of brewed coffee).
14.	<p>Agree or Disagree: People use substances to help them feel better or deal with stress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people may use substances to make them feel better. The reasons why people use may be very complex, we will talk about this later • All of us experience stress, but it’s important to learn how to manage it in a healthy way • Using substances like drinking or using other drugs may provide us with temporary relief from stress but using it as a coping strategy may lead to significant harm (iminds.ca, 2016)
15.	<p>Activity: Sticky Note Brainstorm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People around the world have been using a wide variety of drugs—caffeine, tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and so on—for various reasons for thousands of years. For youth, the decision to use or not to use a substance is influenced by many factors.

Let's take a closer look at some of the reasons that may influence someone's decision to use or not use a substance.

Have the following headings on two separate pieces of chart paper: "Reasons youth may choose to use substances" and "Reasons youth may choose not to use substances".

Give students sticky notes and have them brainstorm ideas (one per sticky note) and place them on the papers.

After students are done, ask for a couple of volunteers to read out responses (if no one volunteers, facilitator can then read them out).

Some possible responses may include:

Reasons youth may choose to use substances:

- Peer pressure
- Boredom
- As a way to cope/deal with stress
- Medical use – both self-medication and physician prescribed for relief from depression, anxiety, sleeping issues, physical pain
- To escape or numb uncontrollable feelings
- Family (modelling behaviour)
- Cultural and social influences - normative
- Curiosity
- To have fun/feel excitement/pleasure
- To fit in
- To try to feel more confident (e.g., liquid courage)
- It's available
- To stay awake to study/work
- Media/Social media

Reasons youth may choose not to use substances:

- Lack of interest
- Fear of legal consequences
- Fear of parental consequences
- Negative effects on the body and mind
- To avoid social consequences and stigma
- To avoid stereotypes of substance users
- Cultural and social influences

"The reasons why we use a drug are important since they influence our patterns of use and risk of harmful consequences. For example, if it is out of curiosity or another fleeting motive, only occasional or experimental use may follow. If the motive is strong and enduring (e.g., relieving chronic stress or

	<p>other mental health challenges) then more long lasting and intense substance use may follow. Motives for intense short-term use (e.g., to fit in, have fun or alleviate temporary stress) may result in risky behaviour with high potential for serious harm”.</p> <p>The Ups and Downs of Stress - www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/iminds/stress-outline.pdf</p>
16.	<p>The Impacts of Substance Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now we will talk about the ways that substance use could impact a person’s life.
17.	<p>Optional activity: <i>Students can work alone or in pairs and brainstorm examples for each category of what ways substances can affect a person’s life and then review as a class if time permits OR just brainstorm as a large group.</i></p> <p>Note: <i>keep slide 17 up while students’ brainstorm</i></p>
18.	<p>Physical Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long- and short-term effects on the body and health (i.e., tobacco can cause lung cancer and nicotine addiction) Using substances such as alcohol, nicotine, cannabis at a young age can impact brain development.
19.	<p>Video: Under Construction: Alcohol and the Teenage Brain https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2gVzVIBc_g</p>
20.	<p>Friends and Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lose trust Change in friends groups Social isolation, hiding use
21.	<p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can affect how we feel about ourselves and our relationships with others Felling sad, irritable, guilty Lack of motivation More serious mental health concerns – depression, anxiety, psychosis or schizophrenia Self-harm
22.	<p>School Related</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower marks, missing class

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harder to concentrate, memory and learning impacted, distraction when not able to use the substance • Fines or suspension if found using substances while on school property • Removal from school teams, clubs
23.	Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiding use, secretive • Poor judgment - driving, risky activities
24.	Financial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive, may need to steal in order to afford substances • Debt incurred
25.	Legal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impaired charges, license suspension, fines, increase insurance costs or non insurable • Charges due to violence/assault
26.	<p>Video: Problematic Substance Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier we reviewed the substance use continuum, ranging from non-use of substances to substance use disorder (addiction). So, let's talk further about the problematic part of the spectrum (high-risk use and substance use disorder) • <p>VIDEO: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVLpnMHHEPU (How Addiction Affects the Brain, 2:30 min)</p> <p>Ask: What did you think about the video, what were some of the key messages, is there anything that surprised you?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance use can be problematic when a person continues to seek out a substance despite the negative effects to themselves, their family, or their friends. • Addiction is not due to weakness or lack of willpower. • It is a chronic disease involving changes in the brain – where communication process in the brain is disrupted, leading to a large amount of a brain chemical called dopamine to be released overwhelming receptors resulting in the “high” people experience. To keep that feeling going they take the substance again, again, and again. Eventually the brain changes and adapts driving them to seek out more just to get the same feeling. • Stopping a substance can cause withdrawal symptoms – nausea, tremors, depression, etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking too much of a substance or a combination can cause an overdose, serious illness or even death • Young people are especially vulnerable to addiction (before 25 years old but especially before 16 years old) because their brain are still developing. (We saw this in an earlier video in more detail - Under Construction: Alcohol and the Teenage Brain) <p>Addiction can be successfully treated with supports; getting help may save a life</p>
27.	<p>Problematic Substance Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some different signs a person might notice when it comes to someone who is struggling with problematic substance use. Just because someone is showing these signs does not necessarily, mean they are using substances. However, if you are worried about someone you know or about yourself speak with a trusted adult who can help direct you to more resources and support. <p>Ask: What can these behavioural changes look like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in activities or hobbies • Unusual laziness • Change in overall attitude/personality with no identifiable cause • New friends are known to use substances • Recurring silliness or giddiness • Changes in behaviour – irrational and paranoia • Drop in grades at school or performance at work or on teams • Excessive need for privacy, often unreachable • Skips school or often late from lunch • Vehicle collisions • Changes in habits at home • Loss of interest in family or friend activities • Chronic dishonesty • Difficulty paying attention, focusing, and/or forgetful • Changes in personal grooming habits • “I don’t care” attitude • General lack of motivation, energy, self esteem • Possession of drug paraphernalia • Sudden oversensitivity, temper tantrums, or resentful behaviour
28.	<p>Tips and Support Reducing Consumption or Quitting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes a good first step is talking to someone we trust who is already in our life. <p>Ask: where would people your age go for help?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible answers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/guardian or other family member i.e., older sibling, aunt/uncle • Friend • School counsellor • Principal • Trusted adult i.e., coach • Health care professional i.e., nurse, doctor
29.	Sources of Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people may use substances like alcohol or cannabis in a way that causes problems in their lives. There are different community organizations and professionals that specialize in helping individuals who are having problems with substances like alcohol, commercial tobacco, cannabis or who have addictions to address these difficulties. These services can also offer support to someone's family and friends. • Contact information on screen for: Kids help phone, Connex Ontario, AFS, Alcoholic Anonymous (211), Addictions Treatment clinic at SAH.
30.	Thank You!
31.	References

Curriculum Links

The Ministry of Education – [Ontario Physical Health and Education Curriculum 2019](#)

Curriculum Requirements – Grade 7

- **D1.2 Mental health, substances, support** - demonstrate an understanding of linkages between mental health problems and problematic substance use, as well as between brain development and cannabis use, and identify school and community resources (e.g., trusted adults at school, guidance counsellors, public health services, help lines) that can provide support for mental health concerns relating to substance use, addictions, and related behaviours.
- **D2.3 Body image, substance use** - explain how preoccupation with body image or athletic performance can contribute to harmful or problematic eating habits and substance use, and demonstrate the ability to make informed choices about caring for their bodies.
- **D3.2 Implications of substance use, addictions, and related behaviours** - analyse the personal and societal implications of issues related to substance use, addictions, and related behaviours (e.g., effects of technology dependence on school and workplace performance, personal relationships, and physical health; impacts of pornography viewing patterns on relationships; risks associated with vaping and chewing tobacco; effects of second-hand

smoke on non-smokers and children; legal and health implications of underage drinking and cannabis use; body damage and reputation loss among athletes as a result of the use of steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs; risk of HIV/AIDS with intravenous drug use; risk of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder [FASD] as a result of alcohol use during pregnancy).

Curriculum Requirements – Grade 8

- **D1.3 Warning signs, consequences** - identify and describe the warning signs of problematic substance use and related behaviours for a variety of activities and substances, including cannabis (e.g., changes in behaviour, negative impact on mental health, gradual withdrawal from social circles, a drop in academic performance), and the consequences that can occur (e.g., financial problems resulting from online gaming or gambling; unhealthy expectations of intimacy from repeated exposure to unrealistic portrayals of sex online; legal consequences connected with underage cannabis use; aggressive behaviours related to alcohol use that can lead to gender-based violence, dating violence, or sexual assault; overdose as a result of misuse of prescription medications, including pain relievers such as opioids, or as a result of taking illicit drugs; inability to make healthy decisions as a result of drug use; binge drinking and alcohol poisoning; injury, death, or legal charges resulting from accidents caused by impaired driving; self-harming behaviours related to having a mental illness such as depression that are exacerbated by substance abuse; fetal alcohol spectrum disorder [FASD] in children as a result of alcohol abuse by the mother during pregnancy).