

Binge Drinking

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- students will be able to assess personal knowledge and opinions about alcohol use
- students will be able to describe the range of emotions that result from binge drinking
- students will be able to understand that binge drinking is a form of problematic substance use
- students will be able to identify problems that may arise at social gatherings that involve alcohol, strategies to prevent these problems, and effective responses when problems do occur

CONTENT AND TIME (80-MINUTE LESSON)

- 2.1 Introduction (10 minutes)
- 2.2 Alcohol: Fact or Myth Quiz (20 minutes)
- 2.3 Activity: Binge Drinking Blackout (20 minutes)
- 2.4 Planning Ahead (20 minutes)
- 2.5 Closure: Key Messages (10 minutes)

REQUIRED MATERIALS

HANDOUT 2.1: Alcohol: Fact or Myth Quiz

SIGNS: I got drunk and...

HANDOUT 2.2a: Planning Ahead Sample

HANDOUT 2.2b: Planning Ahead

HANDOUT 2.3: Cannabis Q & A

Journal entries from Lesson 1

Journal books or loose-leaf paper

Making poor decisions during parties can lead to life-changing consequences. These consequences include acute embarrassment over one's behaviour, unwanted sexual activity (possibly resulting in pregnancy or STDs), a criminal record, injury or a serious vehicle accident. This lesson provides an opportunity for students to evaluate potential risks well ahead of time and reflect on personal values about drinking.

In Alberta, possession and consumption of alcohol is illegal for youth under 18. Using under these circumstances can result in negative legal or parental consequences. However, statistics show that 47% of Alberta youth from grades 7 to 12 use alcohol, and the prevalence of high risk/binge use is 15% (Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey, 2016–17). The reality is that many teenagers encounter the presence of alcohol during social activities, and some of them will choose to engage in experimentation, regular use or harmful use.

2.1 Introduction

(10 minutes)

Invite volunteers to read their journal entries written during the last class. Discuss how attitudes vary from different levels of substance use; for example, a teenager who is using problematically will probably have a different point of view than an adult who does not use.

2.2 Alcohol: Fact or Myth Quiz

(20 minutes)

This quiz is designed to have students recognize what they already know about alcohol. It also gives them a chance to express opinions about alcohol use. Ask students to identify whether each of the following statements is fact or myth, and to give reasons for their answers. Once you have completed the quiz orally, distribute **HANDOUT 2.1 Alcohol: Fact or Myth Quiz**, which provides answers to each question. Have students read through and discuss as a class or in pairs.

1. Girls can't "keep up" when it comes to drinking alcohol.
2. I'm in control when I'm drunk.
3. If someone passes out from drinking, it's OK to let him or her sleep it off.

During your discussion, ask students how many of them have CPR or First Aid training and would know what to do in this situation.

4. One or two drinks will affect a person's driving ability.
5. As long as you're eating while you're drinking, you won't get drunk.
6. Drinking coffee or taking a cold shower reduces intoxication.
7. Your mood plays an important role in the way alcohol affects you.
8. I'm more appealing to others when I've been drinking.
9. A person experiencing a problem with drinking cannot function without alcohol.

During your discussion, you may have students reflect on other forms of problem drinking by evaluating the role alcohol could play in the major life areas discussed in Lesson 1 (family, friends/recreation, school/job, physical health, emotional and spiritual health, finances, and the law).

10. Drinking can make you feel invincible.

During your discussion, you may want to ask students to identify examples of embarrassing or dangerous behaviour, such as falling down, slurring speech, unwanted sexual activity, becoming aggressive, drinking and driving, etc.

2.3 Activity: **Binge Drinking Blackout** (20 minutes)

Ask students if they know what it means to “blackout.” A person who blacks out experiences a short-term loss of memory and forgets events that occurred while drinking. The purpose of Binge Drinking Blackout is to have students identify what it would be like to blackout after a bout of drinking, and to experience some of the negative consequences that could result from binge drinking.

There are two versions of this activity. Select the one that you feel is most appropriate for your class. Regardless of which version you choose, it is important to emphasize that the situations presented are hypothetical. Some students may recognize behaviours that they or others have exhibited while drinking.

It is necessary for them to keep real names and events separate from this activity. Also emphasize that the activity is not meant to embarrass anyone, or to glamorize drunken behaviour. The focus is to identify negative consequences and emotions that could result from binge drinking. Students will have a chance to voice any personal concerns they have during the discussion that follows.

Version 1

Ask up to seven volunteers to take turns standing at the front of the room, one at a time. Fully explain the parameters of volunteering, so that students will know exactly what they are getting themselves into. Each volunteer will assume the role of someone who has been binge drinking. The rest of the class will read a sign describing a specific behaviour that the volunteer displayed while he or she was drinking. The volunteer should not be aware of the behaviour, and therefore, is not permitted to look at this sign. Seven signs are provided entitled “I drank too much and...”:

<i>I drank too much and... embarrassed myself by flirting with everyone in the room.</i>	<i>I drank too much and... got a ride home with someone who had been drinking.</i>	<i>I drank too much and... passed out and didn't wake up for hours.</i>
<i>I drank too much and... told my friends everything that bugs me about them.</i>	<i>I drank too much and... threw up all over the couch and the people sitting on it.</i>	<i>I drank too much and... fell down the stairs and broke my ankle.</i>
<i>I drank too much and... started a fight and broke someone's nose.</i>		

The object of the game is to have the class treat the volunteer according to the role he or she has assumed. The class can give hints about events that occurred, without being obvious or directly stating what happened, for example, “Don’t you remember what you said to me?” “I was sitting right beside you when it happened!” Even though the situations are hypothetical, stress the importance of refraining from using hurtful comments.

The volunteer can also ask specific questions about his or her behaviour, such as, “Was I rude to you?” “Did I hurt you?” “Did we leave alone or with other people?” This student will attempt to guess his or her behaviour. You may also allow the class to indicate if he or she is “hot, warm or cold” in guessing. The game is played until the volunteer can account for his or her behaviour. You can repeat the game up to six times using other volunteers.

Version 2

As an alternative, have volunteers work in pairs. Give each pair one of the “I got drunk and” signs. Allow the students a few minutes to go into the hallway and develop a brief dialogue about the situation they have been assigned. One student will role-play the person who was drinking, and the other student will role play a person who witnessed the behaviour. Both volunteers will know about the behaviour, but the class will not. Through their dialogue, they will help the class determine what happened. Each pair will present their dialogue to the class, without being obvious or stating what happened.

Sample Dialogue

Student A: Don't you remember what you said to me?

Student B: Not really, but I think I was out of line.

Student A: Ya, that would be a good guess.

Student B: Did I lie to you?

Student A: Not exactly. But you didn't have to be brutally honest.

Student B: So I told you the truth?

Student A: It's not about whether you were honest or not. If you don't want to be my friend, why don't you just say so!

Student B: Why wouldn't I want to be your friend?

Student A: Well, it sure didn't seem like you wanted to be my friend at the party.

Members of the class will try to identify the event that occurred, based on the dialogue presented. This version of the game can also be played up to seven times.

Have students describe the range of emotions that could result from blacking out (embarrassment, guilt, shame, remorse, etc.). Ask how they or their friends would react to the types of behaviour demonstrated in this game. Discuss the negative consequences that these scenarios could potentially lead to. If you find that students are sharing personal experiences, try to bring the conversation back to a more general context. Remind everyone of the importance of confidentiality when describing events that involve others.

Alcohol is one of the most widely used drugs in Canada. People drink for many reasons: to add pleasure to social events, to relax, or to participate in religious or festive celebrations. Most people drink alcohol in a low-risk way. These are people who drink moderately by consuming smaller amounts in low-risk situations. Generally, their drinking does not have legal consequences or cause problems with family, friends, school, health or finances.

Some people use alcohol in a problematic way. They may be physically addicted to alcohol and not able to function without the drug in their systems. Other people are able to go for days or weeks without alcohol, but drink a lot at one time (for men this is defined as four or more drinks on one occasion; for women, it is three or more drinks on one occasion). This pattern of drinking is commonly referred to as binge drinking. Binge drinking increases the risk of injury from accidents, impaired driving or health problems (such as seizures, stroke and kidney failure) (AADAC, 2000a).

2.4 Planning Ahead

(20 minutes)

Brainstorm events that may involve alcohol and record ideas on the board. Ask students to provide an example of low-risk and high-risk decisions at some of the events listed. Explain that students will work in groups to develop a safety plan for young people attending a gathering that may involve alcohol. Ask the groups to establish what the event is, where it is taking place and who is attending. Next, they will describe in detail three key elements of their plan:

- preventive strategies to avoid problems
- potential problems that may occur
- a plan of action for responding to difficult situations.

Provide the handout, *Planning Ahead Sample*, to discuss examples with the class.

2.5 Closure: Key Messages

(10 minutes)

Raise the question of who is responsible for the decisions made at parties. Emphasize that people who host parties have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their guests; however, each guest is also accountable for his or her own well-being and the results of decisions made. If it is appropriate, provide a recent example from the news, which illustrates poor decision-making that resulted in tragic consequences.

There are legal responsibilities for people hosting events where guests are drinking. If drunken guests fall down the stairs, walk through a patio door, start a fight, or injure themselves or others, the homeowner could be sued. Some hosts try to reduce the risks of being sued by having a designated driver or special event insurance (AADAC, 2002i, pp. 13-14).

As a homework assignment, distribute the handout Cannabis Q & A and ask students to read through carefully. Research shows that alcohol and cannabis are the most commonly used drugs among Alberta youth from grades 7 to 12. While Lesson 2 has focused on alcohol use, it is also important for the students to know facts about cannabis. This question-and-answer sheet provides good background information about cannabis that students will be able to use during activities throughout the unit.

Journal writing assignment

Write about a situation where you made a poor decision and hurt someone. How did you feel about your actions? What did you do afterwards? Has this experience affected your current attitude? Why?

Alcohol: Fact or Myth Quiz

Rate the level of risk in each of the situations below. Some risks may have positive outcomes, and others negative. Rate the risks according to your personal comfort level.

1. Girls can't "keep up" when it comes to drinking alcohol **FACT**

Biological sex, weight, tolerance to alcohol and state of mind all contribute to the effect alcohol will have on an individual. The same amount of alcohol affects most women more than it affects men because women generally have less water in their bodies to dilute the alcohol. The alcohol is less watered down in a woman's bloodstream (AADAC, 2001b, p. 1).

Also, men have more of the enzyme gastric alcohol dehydrogenase, which breaks down alcohol in the stomach (Kinney, 2000, pp. 52–53). For men, more alcohol breaks down in the stomach; therefore, less alcohol enters the bloodstream and goes to the brain. However, for women, less alcohol is broken down in the stomach; more alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream and sent to the brain.

2. I'm in control when I'm drunk **MYTH**

Alcohol affects judgment, lowers inhibitions and can lead to poor choices, which may mean that you take chances you would not otherwise take. For example, some people have unplanned and unprotected sex when they are drunk (AADAC, 2003g).

3. If someone passes out from drinking, it's OK to let him or her sleep it off **MYTH**

A person is experiencing alcohol overdose if he or she:

- a) is not responding when spoken to, pinched, shaken or poked
- b) cannot stand up
- c) does not respond to being woken up
- d) shows slow and laboured breathing
- e) has purplish, cold or clammy skin
- f) has a rapid pulse rate

Seek medical attention if you see these signs in a person who has been drinking by calling 911, roll the person on his or her side to prevent choking if vomiting occurs, and stay with him or her to monitor breathing (AADAC, n.d.a).

4. One or two drinks will affect a person's driving ability..... **FACT**

After one drink, a person begins to lose coordination, even if he or she does not appear drunk. A driver who has had one or two drinks may take more chances at a time when judgment, coordination and reaction time are reduced. (AADAC, 2003g).

Some people think that they will not get drunk if they don't drink hard liquor, but a standard drink of any type has the same alcohol content, whether it is a standard glass of wine (142 ml or 5 ounces), a bottle of regular (5%) beer (341 ml or 12 ounces), or a regular serving of hard liquor (43 ml or 1.5 ounces).

5. As long as you're eating while you're drinking, you won't get drunk **MYTH**

Alcohol enters the bloodstream by absorption through the lining of the stomach and intestine, mainly the intestine. The presence of food in the stomach can slow the absorption of the alcohol into the bloodstream. Drinking non-alcoholic beverages will also decrease the effects of alcohol to an extent by diluting alcohol in the blood (AADAC, 2003g). With continued drinking, however, neither food nor non-alcoholic beverages will prevent intoxication (AADAC, 2001b, p. 1).

6. Drinking coffee or taking a cold shower reduces intoxication..... **MYTH**

Coffee cannot reduce the levels of alcohol in your bloodstream, and neither can a cold shower. Only time can reduce your level of intoxication, as your liver gradually removes the alcohol from your bloodstream (Kinney, 2000, p. 45).

7. Your mood plays an important role in the way alcohol affects you..... **FACT**

Alcohol often intensifies emotions. If you are in a good mood, drinking moderate amounts can enhance feelings of contentment and happiness. If you are irritable, alcohol can trigger feelings of depression or anger.

8. I'm more appealing to others when I've been drinking **MYTH**

You may think that you look attractive to others, but that does not mean that they share your opinion. Alcohol changes the way your body and mind function. You might say or do things under the influence of alcohol that you would not normally say or do (AADAC, 2003g).

Many people drink in social situations to feel more self-confident, relieve anxiety or lower inhibitions; however, if you feel the need to rely on alcohol to elevate your mood or feel better about yourself, this can lead to negative consequences and dependence.

9. People who use alcohol in a problematic way cannot function without alcohol..... **MYTH**

A person who uses alcohol in a problematic way may be physically addicted to alcohol and unable to function without the drug in his or her system. Other people are able to go for days or weeks without alcohol, but drink a great deal at one time. This pattern of drinking is commonly referred to as binge drinking. Binge drinking is just one example of problem drinking. An important consideration is how your use of alcohol affects your life (AADAC, 2000a).

10. Drinking can make you feel invincible..... **FACT**

Alcohol affects judgment, reduces inhibitions and influences decision-making. It is a depressant drug that travels quickly through the bloodstream to the brain. It slows down the central nervous system and brain functioning. If you are under the influence of alcohol, you are more likely to make mistakes that could embarrass or even hurt you (AADAC, 2003g).

*I drank too
much and...*

**embarrassed
myself by
flirting with
everyone in the
room.**

*I drank too
much and...*

**got a ride home
with someone
who had been
drinking.**

*I drank too
much and...*

**passed out and
didn't wake up
for hours.**

*I drank too
much and...*

**told my friends
everything that
bugs me about
them.**

*I drank too
much and...*

**threw up all
over the couch
and the people
sitting on it.**

*I drank too
much and...*

**fell down the
stairs and broke
my ankle.**

*I drank too
much and...*

**started a fight
and broke
someone's
nose.**

Planning Ahead Sample

WHAT IS THE EVENT?

Camping

WHERE IS IT TAKING PLACE?

In the woods by the lake

WHO IS ATTENDING?

A group of 12 friends

HOW CAN WE PREVENT PROBLEMS FROM HAPPENING?

Make sure that everyone is familiar and comfortable with each other.

Bring lots of food and fun activities.

Know your surroundings.

Take a cell phone.

Make sure that nobody who has been drinking drives.

WHAT ARE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT OCCUR?

Someone wanders off and has been missing for some time.

Two people decide to go swimming in the lake.

One friend becomes aggressive after a disagreement.

WHAT IS OUR PLAN OF ACTION FOR HANDLING THESE PROBLEMS?

Have two people who have not been drinking look for the person who wandered off, and have the third person stay with the others. The two people looking should take a flashlight, ask other campers if they have seen their friend and call out his or her name repeatedly.

Think of another fun and safe activity you could do as a group and tell your friends they can go swimming tomorrow. If possible, notify the park ranger.

Talk in a low tone to calm him or her down. Keep within your own personal space. Avoid arguing and accept his or her point of view, even if you disagree.

Planning Ahead

WHAT IS THE EVENT?

WHERE IS IT TAKING PLACE?

WHO IS ATTENDING?

HOW CAN WE PREVENT PROBLEMS FROM HAPPENING?

WHAT ARE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT OCCUR?

WHAT IS OUR PLAN OF ACTION FOR HANDLING THESE PROBLEMS?

Cannabis Q & A

Q: What is cannabis?

A: Cannabis (also called marijuana) is a legally available drug in Canada. It is a mood-altering drug that comes from the Cannabis Sativa plant. Cannabis comes in several forms: as marijuana (the dried flowering buds and leaves of the plant); as oils, waxes and resins (cannabis extracts); as edible cannabis products (eaten or drunk); and as topical cannabis products (applied to external surfaces of the body). The “high” caused by cannabis comes from THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), a chemical found within the plant. Some slang names for cannabis include weed, pot, grass, Mary Jane and chronic.

Q: How do people use cannabis?

A: People can use cannabis in three basic ways: inhalation (smoked or vapourized), ingestion (eaten or drunk) and absorption (through the skin).

Q: What are the short-term effects of cannabis on the body and mind?

A: Cannabis contains a chemical called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC affects mood and physical functions controlled by the brain. It causes the heart to beat faster and produces changes in blood pressure. Cannabis can make you feel more relaxed. Cannabis can also make you slower to react: driving while high on cannabis is not safe. Cannabis can cause you to lose some of your ability to learn and concentrate. Some users feel severe anxiety, and paranoid thoughts. Consuming too much cannabis can cause toxic effects. If cannabis is combined with other drugs, the risk can increase. Signs of cannabis poisoning include changes in heart rate, extreme nausea/vomiting, anxiety, extreme confusion, panic attacks or paranoia and seizures. If you are concerned that you or someone you’re with is showing signs of cannabis poisoning or excessive consumption, call the Poison & Drug Information Service (PADIS) (toll-free 1-800-332-1414), Health Link (call 811 or 1-866-408-5465 for internet phone users), or 911.

Q: How long do these effects last?

A: If you smoke cannabis, you will probably feel the “high” quickly and it could last several hours. If you eat it, it can take up to four hours to feel the full effects and you feel it for a longer time (up to 12 hours or more).

Q: What are some of the long-term effects of cannabis?

A: Cannabis smoke contains cancer-producing chemicals. This is an area that is still being studied but we do know that cannabis smoke is similar to tobacco smoke in some ways. As with tobacco, smoking cannabis can eventually damage the lungs and can lead to chronic coughing. It can also play a part in leaving the body vulnerable to diseases that interfere with breathing, such as bronchitis. People who smoke both cannabis and tobacco may develop lung, neck and head cancers at a younger age than those who smoke only tobacco.

Some people who use cannabis heavily for a long time have problems with short-term memory, concentration and abstract thinking.

Q: Is it a problem if pregnant women use cannabis?

A: Women who use cannabis during pregnancy are more likely to have babies with a low birth weight. There is also some evidence to suggest that as children grow up, they may have some learning and behaviour problems.

Q: Do people become dependent on cannabis?

A: People who use cannabis often may find that they need more and more to get the same effect. Heavy users can become mentally and physically dependent on how it makes them feel. They can't stop using cannabis even when it causes serious problems. Dependent users who quit may feel withdrawal symptoms like troubled sleep, irritability, anxiety, nausea, sweating and loss of appetite. These symptoms can last for less than a week, but craving can last longer.

Source: [Drugsafe.ca/cannabis](https://www.drugsafe.ca/cannabis)