

# Alcohol use

## SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

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Evaluate the need for balance and variety in daily activities that promote personal health

Identify and communicate values and beliefs that affect healthy choices

Evaluate the impact of personal behaviour on the safety of self and others

Analyze influences on decision-making

- identify the reasons why people use drugs
- examine the effects of alcohol on the body
- understand the difference between alcohol use and dependence
- reflect on personal attitudes about alcohol use

## CONTENT AND TIME (45-MINUTE LESSON)

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2.1 Opening activity: Alcohol acceptance (10 minutes)

2.2 Analyzing alcohol (20 minutes)

2.3 Poster parts (10 minutes)

2.4 Review and homework assignment: Drinking dilemma (5 minutes)

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

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HANDOUT 2:1: Alcohol acceptance

HANDOUT 2.2: Analyzing alcohol

HANDOUT 2.4: Drinking dilemma Poster paper

Felts

Glue sticks

Notebooks



## 2.1 Opening activity: Alcohol acceptance

(10 minutes)

Distribute HANDOUT 2.1: Alcohol acceptance. Have the students read each scenario and write true or false in the space provided. Once everyone has finished, discuss responses with the class. This is a good opportunity to explain the reasons why people use drugs, which are provided beside the answers below:

<i>ANSWERS</i>	<i>EXPLANATION</i>
1. <b>T</b>	People may use drugs because of family environment
2. <b>T</b>	People may use drugs because of social pressure
3. <b>F</b>	People may use drugs out of curiosity
4. <b>T</b>	People may use drugs because of emotional problems such as anger, stress, anxiety, boredom or depression
5. <b>F</b>	People may use drugs to rebel against authority
6. <b>F</b>	People may use drugs to help them create a personal image of themselves
7. <b>T</b>	People may use drugs to change the way the body or the mind functions
8. <b>F</b>	People may use drugs because of group pressures

## 2.2 Analyzing alcohol

(20 minutes)

In preparation for this activity, take one photocopy of HANDOUT 2.2: Analyzing alcohol and cut out the information cards provided. Divide the students into six groups. Provide each group with a piece of poster paper, a glue stick, assorted felts and one of the information cards. Explain that this group work activity examines alcohol use and the effects of alcohol on the body.

To begin, have the students in each group read through the information card they received. Canvass the room to clarify difficult words and answer any questions about the content. Ask the students to glue the information card to their poster paper. They will then work together to design a poster that illustrates the information they have read. Explain that the groups will have one minute to present their illustrations upon completion.



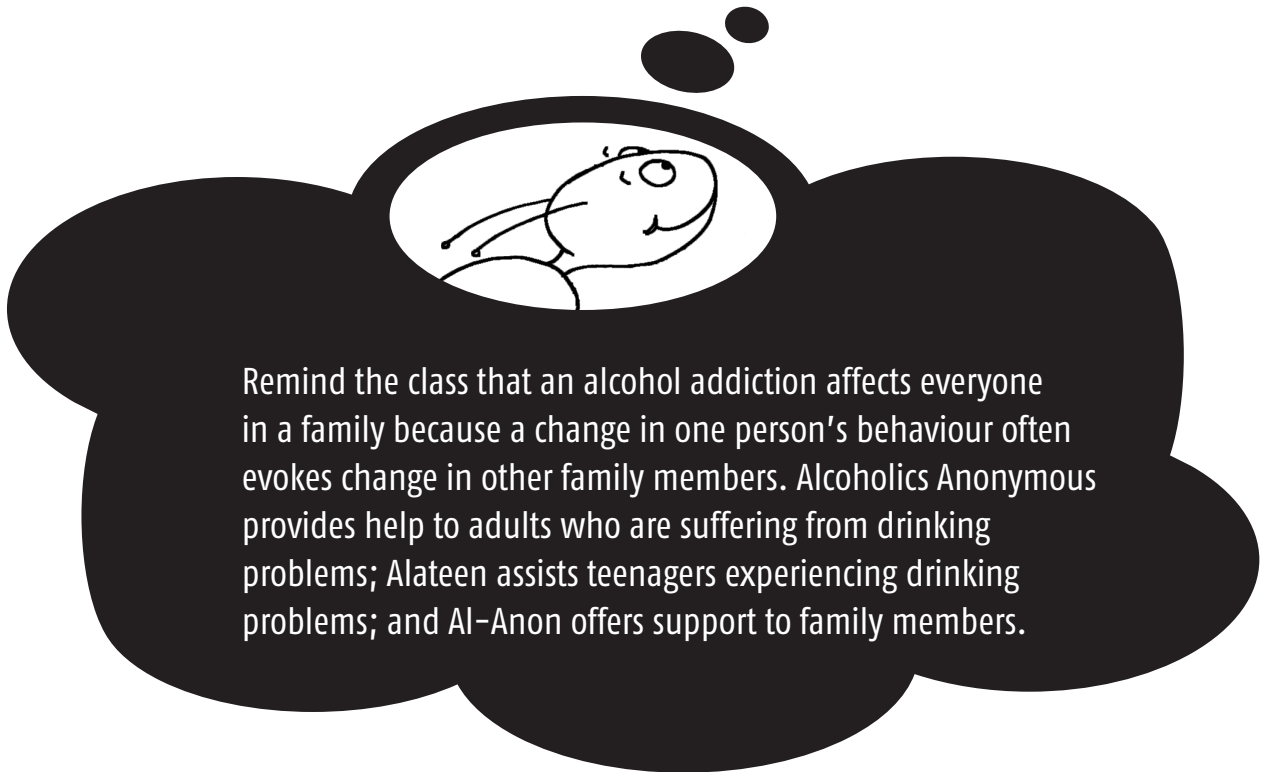
The students may request more detailed information about the reasons why alcohol affects people in different ways. This information is provided briefly on the card titled: How much alcohol? The following is a more thorough explanation of these factors:

- Regular drinking increases tolerance – you need more alcohol to get the same effect.
- People who have a lower metabolism break down alcohol at a slower rate; and as a result, they feel the effects longer.
- Your weight and amount of body fat make a difference. The effects of alcohol depend on the percentage of alcohol in your bloodstream, which in turn depends on the amount of blood in your body. A smaller person becomes more intoxicated than a larger person drinking the same amount. This is because the concentration of alcohol in the blood is greater in the smaller person.
- Women generally have a higher ratio of body fat to water. Alcohol does not dissolve in fat the way it does in water. With less water to dilute alcohol, women tend to feel the effects of alcohol sooner than men.

## 2.3 Poster parts

(10 minutes)

Have the students from each group present their illustrations and a brief summary of the information they were assigned. Display the posters around the room. Encourage the students to read the information provided on each poster at some point during the unit.



## 2.4 Review and homework assignment: Drinking dilemma

(5 minutes)

Ask the students to reflect individually on their attitude about alcohol. Have them consider whether the information learned in today's lesson changed their perception of drinking.

Check the class envelope and respond to any questions asked.

As an extension to this lesson, you can send home HANDOUT 2.4: Drinking dilemma. The students can write a brief response to each scenario provided and return their work to be stored in their notebooks.

# Alcohol acceptance

Read each situation carefully. Circle T if you think the statement is true, or F if you think it is false.

1. Sahir's mom and dad have an occasional drink, usually during social events. Sahir's chances of developing a drinking problem are lower than they are for somebody who comes from a family of heavy drinkers ..... **F T**
2. Teresa feels nervous and awkward around people, especially at parties. Teresa has seen her older brother loosen up after having a few drinks. He becomes the "life of the party!" Social pressure is one of the reasons people drink ..... **F T**
3. Tony wonders what it's like to be drunk. He thinks about it a lot and he is very curious to try it. This is unusual Few people try drinking out of curiosity..... **F T**
4. Darcy is having difficulty controlling her anger and relieving her stress. When she is not angry or stressed, she feels depressed. Some people will use alcohol to deal with emotional problems. .... **F T**
5. Lee's parents do not drink alcohol. They tell Lee about the dangers of alcohol and forbid him to use it. Lee has a tendency to rebel against authority. He will probably not experiment with drinking because of his parents' wishes ..... **F T**
6. Personal image is very important to Aria. She hangs out with the "cool" crowd at school. Lately, her friends have begun drinking beer at parties. This does not increase Aria's chance of experimenting with alcohol because it doesn't have anything to do with personal image ..... **F T**
7. Jim has a drink with his buddies once and a while. Usually, it makes him laugh and feel carefree. Sometimes, he experiences relaxation and sleepiness. One reason why people use alcohol is to change the way they feel or think ..... **F T**
8. Ever since Darcy can remember, the people around her have been heavy drinkers. They brag about getting "hammered" and being able to "hold their liquor." Darcy thinks it's okay to drink a lot of alcohol. This accepting attitude does not increase her chances of having a drinking problem ..... **F T**

# Analyzing alcohol

## **Alcohol is a drug**

It is important to remember that alcohol is a drug and should never be mixed with any other drugs. Alcohol is a depressant drug that slows down the central nervous system. Alcohol affects the way your body and mind function by slowing down the messages that get sent to and from the brain. If you drink too much alcohol, your body slows down so much that you go to sleep or become unconscious. Drinking an extreme amount of alcohol may result in alcohol poisoning, which can cause death. Drinking heavily over a long period of time can have serious consequences, such as brain damage, ulcers, liver disease, malnutrition, heart damage and various forms of cancer.

## **Alcohol, your body and your brain**

Alcohol is not digested (broken down in the stomach) the same way that food is. Alcohol is absorbed through the lining of your stomach and intestines and quickly enters your bloodstream. Once it gets into your blood it is circulated to all parts of your body including your brain. Your brain is the part of your body that is the most sensitive to alcohol. Alcohol upsets your brain's ability to send and receive messages. Alcohol's effect on your brain can cause dizziness, confusion, slurred speech, fuzzy vision and poor muscle control.

## **Alcohol and your liver**

After alcohol gets into your blood it goes directly to your liver. Your liver is the organ responsible for cleaning the impurities out of your blood. Your liver must work hard to change the alcohol into water and carbon dioxide. It is then removed from your body through your breath, sweat and urine. This process happens slowly. When people drink alcohol faster than their liver can get rid of it, they will quickly feel the effects of the alcohol. That is why you cannot make yourself less drunk by drinking coffee, running in fresh air or taking a shower. You must wait for your liver to break down the alcohol.

**How much alcohol is too much?**

One beer, one 120 mL glass of wine and one drink with 45 mL of hard liquor contain the same amount of alcohol. Each is considered one drink. A person who has had one drink may feel or act differently than another person who has also had one drink. Alcohol affects people in different ways. It is difficult to determine what effects alcohol will have on a person because it depends on many factors; these include how a person feels, the company he or she is with and the place and time of day. People tend to feel the effects of alcohol more so if they:

- Do not drink on a regular basis
- Have a lower metabolism
- Are smaller in size
- Are women
- Drink quickly

**When does drinking become a problem?**

Anyone who drinks may develop a problem with alcohol. This can be the result of drinking too much at one time or patterns of drinking over a period of time. A drinking problem happens when a person's use of alcohol results in negative consequences. Someone may have a problem with alcohol if his or her drinking causes:

- Difficulties with money
- Trouble with the law (drinking and driving, inappropriate behaviour in public)
- Physical symptoms (loss of appetite, sleeplessness, nausea)
- Emotional symptoms (feeling guilty, anxious, depressed)
- Pain to others (insults, hurtful words and actions)

People who drink to cope with stress or cannot control the amount they drink are at a high risk of developing a problem with alcohol.

**What is the difference between use and dependence?**

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 refresh themselves or to participate in religious or festive celebrations. Most people are social or occasional drinkers. These are people who drink moderately (limited amounts in social situations). Generally, their drinking does not cause problems with physical or mental health, family, friendships, work, money, driving abilities or the law. People who drink moderately do not: drink too much at one time, develop harmful patterns of drinking over a period of time or combine alcohol with other drugs.

# Drinking dilemma

What comes to mind as you read each of the statements below? Write your thoughts in the space provided.

1. Television beer commercials always show people laughing and having a good time when they drink. That makes me think...

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2. The media report that violent crimes are sometimes associated with alcohol use. That makes me think...

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3. Alcohol is served at important celebrations like weddings. That makes me think...

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4. Some people choose not to drink alcohol. That makes me think...

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5. I've heard that a number of famous people are "alcoholics."  
That makes me think...

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6. Some of the people whom I admire also drink.  
That makes me think...

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7. Many news stories report that drinking and driving can cause motor  
vehicle accidents. That makes me think...

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8. In Alberta it is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to drink  
alcohol. That makes me think...

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