

# Substance and Gambling Information

## SUMMARY

**Objective:** To provide students with information about substance use and gambling, and about the harm associated with each.

**Process:** Students will do online research and present their findings to the class. Research projects will focus on the substances that teens in Grade 8 are most likely to encounter (tobacco, alcohol and cannabis), and on gambling.

This lesson is one in a series of Grade 8 lessons. If you aren't able to teach all the lessons, try pairing this lesson with the "Weighing Risks to Make Decisions" or "Peer Influence" lessons.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- identify positive and negative consequences of using substances or gambling
- assess drug and gambling information
- recognize that non-use is the norm
- be aware of accurate facts and rates of use by youth
- know where to find support if required

## CONTENT AND TIME (TWO 45-MINUTE LESSONS)

Part one:

5.1 Definition of Drugs and Gambling (15 minutes)

5.2 Outline Research Assignment (10 minutes)

5.3 Student Research Time (20 minutes)

Part two:

5.4 Group Presentations (30 minutes)

5.5 Class Discussion (10 minutes)

5.6 Closure: Key Messages (5 minutes)

Teaching about substance use and gambling can and should cross all subjects. Here are a few suggestions for use in other subjects.

### REQUIRED MATERIALS

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Computer with Internet access

### LINKS TO SUBJECTS

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- **Language Arts:** Write a short essay, poem or story in lieu of presentations.
- **Leadership:** Present findings to other students in the school, and promote awareness that the majority of students do not use substances.
- **Science:** Explore the health implications of substance use on the brain and other body organs. Explore the effects of substance use on an unborn child.
- **Math:** Using statistics, prepare graphs depicting perceived rates of substance use versus actual rates of use among students.
- **Art:** Create bulletin boards, posters and other works of art featuring the information learned, to disseminate this information to other students.
- **Career and Technology Studies:** Use a computer application to create a brochure with information discovered through the research project.

## 5.1 Definition of Drugs and Gambling

(15 minutes)

Ask students for a definition of gambling. Gambling is the act of risking money, property, or anything of value on an activity with an uncertain outcome. Many believe that adolescents do not gamble. However, teenagers wager, dare and bet on card games, pool games, outcomes of sporting events, personal skill competitions and online games. For many adolescents, winning and losing these activities is secondary. They play for the enjoyment, the social interaction and the challenge. For some adolescents, gambling can be a lot like an addictive drug, which may become a problem.

Ask students for a definition of the word drug. A drug is any substance that can be absorbed, ingested, inhaled or injected into the body and changes the way the mind or body works. The effect of any drug depends on the drug, the expectations of the user and the setting the drug is used in.

Drugs generally fall into categories based on how they affect the body and mind. There are four categories: stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens and cannabis. The following table explains the different categories and the effects on the body.

	<b>Stimulants</b>	<b>Depressants</b>	<b>Hallucinogens</b>	<b>Cannabis</b>
<b>Effects</b>	<p>These drugs increase heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate.</p> <p>These drugs can make you feel up or more energetic.</p> <p>Side effects include paranoid thoughts, fainting, violent behaviour, seizures and vomiting.</p>	<p>These drugs decrease heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate.</p> <p>These drugs can make you feel calm or sleepy. They depress the areas in the brain that control your behaviour, so they can make you feel less nervous and more relaxed.</p> <p>Side effects include nausea and vomiting, drowsiness, weakness, and trouble speaking.</p>	<p>These drugs make you see, hear and feel things different from what is real.</p> <p>They can dramatically change emotions and thoughts.</p> <p>Side effects include dizziness, light-headedness, faster heartbeat, fever and nausea.</p>	<p>These drugs have a mixture of stimulant and depressant effects. They increase heart rate, decrease blood pressure, and open up the airway.</p> <p>These drugs make you feel more relaxed, free and open.</p> <p>Side effects include short-term memory loss, paranoid thoughts and lung damage.</p>
<b>Examples</b>	<p>Nicotine</p> <p>Caffeine</p> <p>Cocaine</p> <p>Crystal meth</p>	<p>Alcohol</p> <p>Heroin</p> <p>Fentanyl</p> <p>Inhalants</p>	<p>Ecstasy</p> <p>LSD (Acid)</p> <p>Mushrooms</p>	<p>Marijuana</p> <p>Edible cannabis products (food/drink)</p> <p>Cannabis extracts (oils, waxes and resins)</p>

As you are teaching about the table, have students think of examples of each category. It is important to note that drugs in the same category also have different effects on the body. For example, the stimulant effects of caffeine on the body are much less than those of crystal meth.

This is a good way to begin the conversation about how drugs are used, and the potential harm associated with using them. As an example, consider prescription medication: When used as directed by a doctor, prescription medication helps people. But when prescription medication is not used as directed, it can harm people's health and can negatively affect their life in many other ways.

## 5.2 Research Assignment

(10 minutes)

**Objective:** To provide students with information about substance use and gambling, and the harm associated with each, and to open a discussion about perceptions of use.

**Instructions:** The substances that teens are most likely to encounter in junior high school are tobacco (nicotine), alcohol, and cannabis. The most common gambling activities among teens are playing scratch tickets, playing cards for money and betting on sporting events. For that reason, focus this lesson on these particular drugs and types of gambling. Expanding this assignment to include other substances, such as illegal drugs, is possible if you think that your students are exposed to them in your community; but be aware that there are risks involved if too much information is provided or if the content is not age and developmentally appropriate.

Divide students into groups of three or four. Tell them they are going to prepare group reports or posters (or another type of presentation) to present to the class, based on material about drugs and gambling found on the Internet. Assign the following topics to the groups of students: alcohol, cannabis, tobacco (nicotine), and gambling.

*It is important to use reputable websites for research. A lot of information online is not accurately sourced. To make sure your students are learning accurate information, stick with websites from organizations like Alberta Health Services, Health Canada and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.*

The presentations should answer the following questions:

- What category does the substance fall into and why?
- What are the short-term and long-term effects of the substance use or gambling activity?
- What are the effects if people use more than one substance at the same time (e.g., drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes)?
- What are the current percentages of youth in Grade 8 who choose not to use this substance or participate in gambling activities?
- Why do you think some students choose to participate in these activities? Why do you think other students choose not to?
- Who can you talk to honestly about this topic and why?
- Where can you go to find out more information, or to get help if you were to need it?

In the second class, have the groups present their findings. You may want to include an evaluation process to engage the other students in listening carefully to the presentations, such as a quiz from the information presented, or journaling or reflection questions (e.g., “What did I learn that I didn’t know before?” or “How will I apply this information to making healthy choices in my life?”).

**5.3 Student Research Time** (20 minutes)

**5.4 Group Presentations** (30 minutes)

**5.5 Class Discussion** (10 minutes)

## 5.6 Closure: Key Messages

(5 minutes)

Discuss with students what they learned from their fellow class presentations, including the information they found surprising, unsettling or meaningful.

By learning about making healthy decisions and receiving accurate, relevant information about the harm associated with substance use and gambling, your students will be better equipped to make healthy choices.