SUBSTANCE ABUSE

KEY CONCEPTS

✓ **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**: Using any illegal substance or using a legal substance incorrectly or for the wrong reasons. Use of a particular substance would also be considered abuse if it resulted in harming the user or placed others in danger.

✓ **ILLEGAL**: Against the law

✓ **ADDICT**: Someone with an uncontrollable need for a substance. The need for or use of the substance interferes with their ability to function normally in everyday life.

✓ **PHYSICAL ADDICTION**: Some substances are physically addictive. This means you may have a negative, physical reaction when you stop using a substance to which your body has become accustomed.

✓ **PSYCHOLOGICAL ADDICTION**: This is when you come to depend on using a substance because it makes you feel better emotionally. For example, you feel that it calms you down or helps you have a fun time.

✓ **WITHDRAWAL**: This is when a person feels intense discomfort when they stop using a substance to which they have become accustomed to. The discomfort can be physical, emotional or both and can range from being quite mild to very painful.

✓ **REHABILITATION**: This is when a person goes through a process to try and help them stop using drugs.

✓ **IN–PATIENT**: This is when a person goes to stay at a clinic for a while in order to help them stop using drugs.

✓ **OUT–PATIENT**: This is when a person does not stay at the clinic, but travels to the facility regularly for therapy and support.

✓ **RELAPSE**: Sometimes, even after a person has received help and rehabilitation, they start using drugs again.
WHAT IS SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

A person is said to be abusing a substance if

- The substance is illegal.
- A legal substance is used in the wrong way or for the wrong reasons.
- The substance being taken harms the user or is dangerous to the people around them.

Some drugs are physically addictive, but all drugs could be psychologically addictive. Teenagers are considered a high risk group for substance abuse and addiction. This means that teenagers stand a higher than normal chance of abusing substances or developing an addiction.

WHAT IS ADDICTION?

Addiction is characterized by the following general symptoms

- inability to resist the need to take the substance;
- increased inner tension or anxiety before taking the substance at the usual time;
- an experience of relief after taking the substance;
- a feeling of loss of control while taking the substance

ALCOHOL IS A DRUG

Alcohol is a mild poison. It is found in beer, wine and spirits. When you drink alcohol, it gets pumped around your body while it waits for your liver to absorb it and make it harmless. When the alcohol reaches your brain it affects your speech, actions, senses and judgement. Drinking too much alcohol causes headaches, vomiting and dehydration. This is called a hangover. Drinking heavily puts pressure on your liver and makes it have to work overtime. This can lead to liver damage.
Cigarettes are considered a drug as it is highly addictive and is harmful to the users as well as to those around them. There are hundreds of chemical substances in cigarette smoke, but three of the most damaging are:

- **Tars** this damages delicate lung tissue and is considered the main cause of cancer in cigarette smoke.
- **Nicotine** this is a poison found only in tobacco leaves. It can be used as an insecticide and one drop of pure nicotine could kill a person. It is a highly addictive substance and can increase the chances of heart disease.
- **Carbon monoxide** replaces needed oxygen in your blood. Carbon monoxide stays in the bloodstream for hours after a cigarette and deprives your body of oxygen.

### DEADLY AND ADDICTIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated average NICOTINE exposure (milligrams) per cigarette</th>
<th>Estimated average TAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 South Africa 1.77mg</td>
<td>1 New Zealand 17.4mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 New Zealand 1.62mg</td>
<td>2 South Africa 17.2mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Australia 1.36mg</td>
<td>3 Switzerland 14.9mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Switzerland 1.32mg</td>
<td>4 Germany 14.8mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Canada 1.32mg</td>
<td>5 Australia 12.8mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Germany 1.25mg</td>
<td>6 Japan 12.1mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Japan 0.99mg</td>
<td>7 Canada 12mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Brazil 0.93mg</td>
<td>8 Brazil 11mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: British American Tobacco / HERALD GRAPHIC
WHY IS SMOKING NOT GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH?

- Smoking can cause diseases such as
  - Chronic bronchitis (an infection that recurs, involving inflammation of the breathing tubes in the lungs.)
  - Laryngitis (inflammation of the throat.)
  - Emphysema (a lung disease that slowly destroys the lungs and the ability to breathe.)
- Smoking can cause cancer of the lungs, mouth and oesophagus.
- Smoking cigarettes stains the teeth, affects the body’s ability to taste and smell and increases the process of wrinkling.
- Cigarette smoking by pregnant women may cause harm to the unborn baby.
- Cigarette smoke has a number of harmful chemicals that pollute enclosed spaces and so affects non-smokers too.
- Chewing tobacco may lead to cancer of the mouth and an addiction as the nicotine is absorbed through the lining in the mouth.
HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SOMEONE IS ABUSING A SUBSTANCE?

There are a number of signs that indicate someone could be abusing a substance.

You can look out for:

**Physical changes**
- Red eyes
- Circles under eyes
- Inflamed nostrils and runny nose
- Shaky hands
- Weight loss
- Always tired
- Skin rashes

**Behavioural changes**
- Spending more time alone
- Blaming others for everything
- Mood swings
- Change in personality from outgoing to depressed
- Starts frequent arguments
- Becomes physically abusive to family and friends
- Drop in school marks
- Increased need and use of money
- Lying or being secretive
- Stealing
- Quitting hobbies or sports

PERSONAL FACTORS EXPLAINING WHY PEOPLE ABUSE SUBSTANCES

Someone may start to abuse a substance if they
- Have low self-esteem
- Are feeling lonely
- Are bored
- Are having difficulty expressing their feelings
- Have experienced trauma or abuse and do not know how to cope
PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND PREVENTION MEASURES THAT REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Once you are addicted to something, it is incredibly difficult to break the addiction. The best defence is to not get involved with substances that may cause an addiction or to monitor their use closely.

Here are some tips that could help to protect you and reduce the chances of you or your friends getting involved with substance abuse:

**Educate yourself**
The information that peers may be giving you on a particular substance will not always be correct. Do your own research into various substances.

**Surround yourself with people who make good choices**
It becomes much easier to resist temptation if you are surrounded by people who are determined to do the same.

**Learn healthy ways to deal with pressure**
Many people who get involved with drugs did so to help them get through a difficult or stressful time. Rather use healthier ways of coping such as talking to adults or friends that you can trust.

**Keep a balanced lifestyle**
Make sure that you are taking care of all the different areas of your health. Eat well and exercise regularly, but also make time to see friends and family, relax and reflect on your life.
SOCIAL FACTORS EXPLAINING WHY PEOPLE ABUSE SUBSTANCES

People may be influenced by

- Their friends.
- How easily available some substances are.
- How the media portrays certain substances like alcohol, cigarettes or marijuana.

EFFECT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse can affect people and society in a variety of ways. Some of the effects may only last a short time and can be easily corrected. Other effects may have much longer-lasting and far reaching consequences.

Effects of substance abuse on education

- Can affect memory.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Absence from school.
- Learning becomes harder.

Effects of substance abuse on crime

- Addicts resort to crime in order to get money for their addiction.
- Some substances can make people behave more aggressively.
- Due to poor judgement, people may do illegal things while under the influence of a substance.
- Being under the influence of a substance can make you more vulnerable to becoming a victim of crime.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Being under the influence of a substance can make you more likely

- To become a victim of rape
- To become a victim of crime
- To engage in impulsive, risky and unsafe behaviour
- To engage in unsafe sex
- To act on suicidal thoughts
- To become abusive yourself
REHABILITATION

There are a number of rehabilitation programmes to assist addicts. These may be at in-patient or out-patient clinics. The treatment usually includes individual counselling, group therapy, family therapy, medication and support groups. Addicts typically need weeks and sometimes months of continuous therapy. There is also a very strong chance of relapse.

PREVENTION: HOW DO I SAY NO?

The best way to avoid developing an addiction or getting involved in substance abuse, is to say NO right from the start. But this can be hard, especially if you are experiencing pressure from your friends. Here are some suggestions:

- Say “no, thanks” and walk away.
- Use an excuse. E.g. “Sorry guys, I have a hockey match tomorrow”.
- Suggest an alternative activity E.g. “Hey! I’m really hungry, let’s go get something to eat”.
- Use humour E.g. “No ways! I need all the brain cells I can get!”.
Below is a table of different substances, the consequences, dangers, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STREET NAMES</th>
<th>APPEARANCE</th>
<th>HOW IT IS TAKEN</th>
<th>IMMEDIATE EFFECT</th>
<th>DANGERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEROIN</strong></td>
<td>Brownish-white powder. Some heroin comes in a brown/black form that looks like hard toffee.</td>
<td>Smoked or injected.</td>
<td>Makes the user relaxed, drowsy and numb, detached from worry, and oblivious to pain.</td>
<td>Addiction; overdose; nausea, vomiting, chills, excessive sweating and muscle and bone pain may follow; liver damage; destroys the chemical balance in the brain to such an extent that the user starts to experience pain in the absence of any injuries;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COCAINE</strong></td>
<td>White powder</td>
<td>Powder is inhaled or snorted</td>
<td>Users feel on top of the world, wide-awake, confident, can raise body temperature and heart rate, decreases appetite.</td>
<td>Addiction; Overdose due to raising the body’s temperature, causing convulsions or a heart attack; snorting seriously damages the cartilage in the nose; anxiety, paranoia, panic attacks; the high can be followed by debilitating lows/depression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CRACK COCAINE</strong></td>
<td>Form of cocaine made into small lumps or rocks that crackle when burnt</td>
<td>Typically heated and smoked</td>
<td>Users feel on top of the world, wide-awake, confident, can raise body temperature and heart rate, decreases appetite.</td>
<td>Addiction; Overdose due to raising the body’s temperature, causing convulsions or a heart attack; snorting seriously damages the cartilage in the nose; anxiety, paranoia, panic attacks; the high can be followed by debilitating lows/depression.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>METH-AMPHETAMINE</strong></td>
<td>Usually takes the form of a white odourless and bitter-tasting crystalline powder, readily soluble in water or alcohol</td>
<td>Can be smoked, injected intravenously, snorted or digested orally</td>
<td>Produce euphoria, wakefulness, increased physical activity, decreased appetite and increased respiration.</td>
<td>Addiction; disturbing hallucinations can lead to extreme paranoia; aggression; insomnia; psychosis; lung and kidney disorders; withdrawal can lead to depression and suicide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LSD</strong></td>
<td>Odourless and colourless drug available in two forms: paper stamps impregnated with LSD or micro-tablets (“microdots”) containing LSD in very low concentrations per tablet.</td>
<td>Tablets are swallowed. It is a myth that LSD can be absorbed through the skin from transfers.</td>
<td>Surroundings seem altered, colours brighter, sounds different, movement and time may seem distorted.</td>
<td>Trips cannot be controlled or stopped; a bad trip can be terrifying; schizophrenia; depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>XT C, E, X, Adam, MDMA,</strong></td>
<td>Tablets of different shapes, sizes and colours - often with a designer logo.</td>
<td>Swallowed</td>
<td>Increases energy and sense of well-being; feelings of euphoria; heightens the senses.</td>
<td>Addiction; overheating and dehydration which can be fatal; fatigue; depression; has been linked to mental health problems; liver, kidney and brain damage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARIJUANA</strong></td>
<td>Solid lump ‘resin’ leaves, stalks and seeds called ‘grass’ or sticky dark oil</td>
<td>Can be smoked or cooked and eaten with food.</td>
<td>Users feel relaxed and may have sharper sense of colours and sounds. Some feel urge to eat. If taken in food, effects can be stronger and harder to control.</td>
<td>Panic attacks; hallucinations; memory loss; infertility; lung cancer; tiredness; lack of motivation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MANDRAX</strong></td>
<td>Usually white tablets</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of relaxation and total peace</td>
<td>Addiction; nausea; loss of consciousness; hallucinations; mood swings; aggression; depression; suicide.</td>
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