

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

DRUGS

As you approach adulthood, you may be put in a situation where you will be exposed to drugs. You know you have a choice, and the best thing to do is to say no to drugs or learn to use appropriate drugs in a moderate and safe way. Never use “hard” drugs such as cocaine, heroin, crack, crystal meth, etc. You may think you already know everything you need to know about drugs, however, you need to ask yourself if it’s worth risking your life for.

Below is a list of common drugs and risks involved:

Drug	What is it	What does it do	Negative Effects	Aftereffects	Dangers	Addictive?
Ecstasy (E, X, XTC, Adam, hug, beans, clarity, the love drug)	Tablet, capsule or powder form. They can have cartoon-like images on them or logos.	Releases serotonin, making you feel extra friendly and full of energy.	Sweating, increased blood pressure and heart rate, anxiety or panic attacks, blurred vision, nausea, vomiting and convulsions.	Confusion, irritability, anxiety, paranoia, depression, memory impairment. May last days to weeks. Long term: Damages the brain cells affecting learning and memory.	Death from dehydration & overheating. Increased blood pressure, heart rate, kidney or heart failure, strokes and seizures. Possible jaundice & liver damage. People with high blood pressure, heart or liver problems, diabetes, epilepsy are at higher risk. If not already aware of these medical conditions, ecstasy can trigger symptoms.	The more you take ecstasy, the less effect it will have. This may lead to increasing dosage seeking that original “high.” No proof of physical dependency.

<p>Cocaine (snow, lines, crack, bump, flake, rock, coke, blow)</p>	<p>Powder, liquid, crystals. Snorted, injected, or smoked in a glass pipe.</p>	<p>Makes you feel alert, hyper and confident.</p>	<p>Psychosis, paranoia, anxiety and seizures.</p>	<p>Major low, depressed, maybe suicidal, tired & hungry. Leading you to wanting more to get out of this depression, thus leading to addiction.</p>	<p>Crack catches on fire easily. Easy to overdose when mixed with other drugs or alcohol. Loss of smell & nose bleeds. Can hurt your lungs, lead to heart attack, psychosis, malnutrition.</p>	<p>Very addictive drug and is one of the hardest drugs to quit. Crack is the most addictive form of cocaine.</p>
<p>Crystal Meth Methamphetamine (speed, fire, meth, chalk, ice, crystal)</p>	<p>White odourless powder or transparent flat crystals. Snorted, in pill form or injected.</p>	<p>An intense rush of energy. Confident and talkative.</p>	<p>Increased heart rate, chest pain, nausea, achy, vomiting, diarrhea, dry mouth, physical tension. Anxiety, impulsiveness, aggression, paranoia and hallucinations.</p>	<p>Effects last 6-12 hours. Afterwards you may feel tired and depressed. Leading you to wanting more to get out of depression, thus leading to addiction. Long-term: Psychosis including hallucinations, paranoia, delusions and aggressive behaviour. Damages brain cells affecting memory and movement.</p>	<p>Increased heart rate and blood pressure. Possible seizures, high body temperature, irregular heartbeat, heart attack, stroke and death Also, risk of infections from used needles.</p>	<p>Tolerance builds up quickly, leading you to want more drugs to achieve that original "high". Highly addictive.</p>
<p>Marijuana (weed, pot, reefer, grass, dope, ganja, Mary Jane, hash, herb, Aunt Mary, skunk, boom, kif, gangster, chronic, blunt)</p>	<p>Looks like leaves crushed or rolled into cigarettes or in a water pipe called a bong. Sometimes found in baked goods also.</p>	<p>Relaxed, mellow and giddy.</p>	<p>Slows reflexes, impaired concentration, forgetfulness and anxiety or panic attacks.</p>	<p>Burnout, slow, unaware, memory problems and unable to concentrate.</p>	<p>Cancer-producing chemicals in the smoke cause lung or neck cancer and infections. Low sperm count, disrupted menstrual cycle and psychosis. A lot of people think they are better drivers when they use marijuana, but this is very dangerous because your reflexes are too slow to react in a fast moving car.</p>	<p>Repeated heavy use may cause negative long-term effects.</p>

HOW TO REDUCE YOUR RISKS

1. Don't do hard drugs such as cocaine, heroin, LSD etc. And don't hang out with people who do use them.
2. Friends who pressure you to use drugs/alcohol are not looking out for your interests. If you don't want to use drugs and alcohol — don't!
3. Don't get into a car with someone who is driving after taking any drugs/alcohol.
4. If you are using drugs/alcohol more days than not, or if you are having financial, personal or school problems while using drugs/alcohol, you may have a problem. Get help before things get out of hand.

NICOTINE

Remember that nicotine is a drug. Smoking is a huge health risk. If you are smoking, now may be a good time to quit. Get help. Visit your health clinic.

ALCOHOL

Depending on the number of drinks you have had, your age, gender, weight, metabolism and tolerance, the effects of alcohol vary. Alcohol is one of the most common drugs of addiction so drink responsibly. It is also important to know that addiction runs in families, so if someone in your family has an addiction it would be wise to consider avoiding alcohol or drink very responsibly. If you are finding yourself needing a drink every day you should consider cutting back, especially when it starts affecting your grades.

! SIGNS OF A DRUG OVERDOSE

- Loss of consciousness which can lead to a coma
- Chest pain
- Heavy sweating
- Overheating
- Faster breathing
- Seizures or uncontrollable twitching
- Delusions and/or hallucinations
- Racing or irregular heart beat
- Cold or pale skin

*KNOW
THE SIGNS!*

call 911 immediately!

! SIGNS OF ALCOHOL POISONING

- Loss of consciousness
- Slow or irregular heart beat
- Vomiting
- Seizure
- Low body temperature
- Pale or bluish skin

IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAKE ALCOHOL POISONING SERIOUSLY

If you do not call 911 the victim may choke on his/her own vomit and their heart may stop. It is not uncommon for someone with alcohol poisoning to die of hypothermia or get permanent brain damage due to dehydration.

TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND

- **Eat before drinking.** Food slows down alcohol absorption.
- **Safe consumption.** Adults should generally have no more than two drinks a day.
- **Know when to stop.** If you are at a party and have had more than a few drinks and are starting to feel woozy, know when enough is enough and stop.
- **If you're on medication, don't drink alcohol.** Some prescription drugs or even over-the-counter drugs can be deadly when mixed with alcohol.
- **Stay safe.** If you feel you've had too much and are about to pass out, get somewhere safe. You don't want someone to take advantage of you.
- **Don't drive.** Four Canadians are killed every day and just fewer than 190 Canadians are injured each day from impaired driving. So get a ride with someone else! (For more information visit www.madd.ca.) Note that 49.9% of car accident fatalities in 2003 among people aged 20-25 were alcohol related.

DANGEROUS LONG-TERM EFFECTS

The more you drink the more problems you will have, especially the more you drink long-term. These problems are not only health related but include issues with relationships, work and finances.

The most common and harmful health effects of drinking include:

- **Liver disease**
 - Can be reversible if alcohol consumption ceases along with beginning healthy-balanced diet.
 - Can become quite serious and require liver transplant.
- **Pancreatitis**
 - Abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea and weight loss.
 - Can lead to diabetes.
- **Heart disease**
 - Deterioration of heart muscle leads to heart failure.
- **Gastrointestinal tract and digestive system**
 - Damage to the stomach and intestines, especially when combined with poor eating habits.
- **Infertility**
 - Impotence and sterility in men.
 - Early menopause and irregular menstruation in women.
 - Premature osteoporosis in women.
- **Cancer or other immune system problems**
 - Depression of the immune system leads to pneumonia and tuberculosis.
 - Cancer of the throat, mouth, esophagus and liver.
 - Women are at higher risk for breast cancer.
- **Anemia**
 - Large red blood cells and platelet levels drop.
- **Dependency**
 - The more you drink, the more tolerance builds up therefore drinking may go unnoticed.
 - Leads to craving it when sober and therefore you drink more.
 - Leads to many of the other health problems discussed earlier.
- **Drinking while pregnant**
 - Birth defects including fetal alcohol syndrome.
 - Fetal alcohol syndrome can include abnormalities such as growth retardation, hearing disorders, mental retardation, facial abnormalities and learning disorders, etc. and has a huge effect on your child.

WITHDRAWAL

Alcohol withdrawal refers to symptoms someone may experience when they quit drinking after being a heavy drinker.

Withdrawal symptoms may include:

Nervousness	Shakiness	Fatigue	Unable to concentrate
Anxiety	Irritability	Rapid mood swings	Depression
Headache	Nausea	Loss of appetite	Insomnia
Rapid heart rate	Clammy skin	Confusion	Agitation
Fever	Convulsions	Blackouts	Hallucinations

TREATMENT FOR DRUG/ALCOHOL ADDICTION

The goal of treatment is to help lessen withdrawal symptoms, prevent complications, and begin recovery.

An effective treatment program will:

- Address all aspects of the individual's life, not just his or her drug addiction.
- Assess the individual often to meet the person's changing needs.
- Allow adequate time for effective recovery.
- Include family counselling and group support systems.
- Include counselling and other behavioural therapies to teach healthy life skills.
- Use motivational therapy emphasizing the individual's readiness to change.
- Include medications combined with therapy.
- Follow up.



<http://www.canadianhealthnetwork.ca>

<http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov>

~~ Learn from Richard's story ~~

I don't have the words to describe how I felt back when my life revolved around drugs. For a period of time, drugs controlled my life. They made me do things I never could have imagined. I never thought I'd ever even try drugs, but one day when my friends were talking about it and saying how great it made them feel - I got curious. The thought of doing something risky excited me. So I snorted my first line of cocaine. Soon the thrill of doing drugs had us all snorting coke every time we got together. Then a friend stole needles from his mom, because she was diabetic and had a case of them, so we used them to try heroin. Time seemed to fly by so quickly and the next thing I knew, I was stealing jewellery from my mom and pawning it off for money to buy drugs. I even started selling my possessions, like my TV and various items around the house. I was actually more afraid of going through withdrawal - rather than seeking that ultimate high. It was not a pretty time. I got fired from my job and dropped out of university. I was seriously out of control.

What changed the situation?

After I lost my job, I'd ask my parents for money to pay the bills. They'd give me the cash, but I would end up spending it on drugs. My parents started questioning my spending when my phone line got cut off for lack of payments. When I got kicked out of my apartment for not paying rent, my family freaked on me. They knew I had been into drugs and hanging out with the wrong people, so they insisted I move back home. I moved home reluctantly and they sat me down and we all talked about my problem. Believe me - it was not easy to sit and open up, but I knew they were trying to help me. They sent me away to a drug rehab center. The thought of people knowing I was at rehab was humiliating, so I decided to cut off my friends and start fresh. It was the best thing for me. Rehab was awful and so boring sometimes, but I had the chance to learn guitar from my roomie - we spent 3 months together in rehab, creating a real friendship. It really helped to go through it all with a good friend. We're on the path to recovery together now and we have blast playing music together - without drugs.

My advice to someone with an addiction or considering trying drugs:

Surround yourself with people you admire. If your friends are doing drugs, ask yourself if you really want to be "one of them." Know what you are capable of and what your dreams are. I'm sure your childhood dream was not to become a drug addict. So don't let yourself get carried away by the drug scene - it's not worth the risk. You could lose everything! It's so hard starting over, so just don't go there. If you are already addicted, get help! You'll feel so much better about yourself. Life is short - DON'T WASTE IT!