

## What role can educators play?

The school is required to create a safe environment for learning and teaching. Schools should be **free of alcohol and drugs at all times**.

- School Management Teams are required to establish a school-level alcohol and drug use policy and enforce such a policy.
- All school events, including those led by the School Governing Body for fundraising purposes, must be alcohol and drug free. In addition, any individual and/or organisation using the school premises must also ensure that the event is alcohol and drug free.
- Ensure learners are taught about alcohol and drug use through the Life Skills subject.
- Raise awareness on alcohol and drug use through other means such as forming partnerships with local organisations and the South African Police Service (SAPS).
- The school must maintain a register of all incidents of alcohol and drug use on school premises. This information must be used to set up programmes specific to your school.
- Implement co-curricular/recreational activities through peer education clubs and drug free sport programmes.
- Involve parents and communities to address challenges such as easy access to alcohol and drugs next to the school and illegal selling to learners.
- Implement drug testing in schools in a fair and transparent manner where there is reasonable suspicion that learners are using illegal drugs. **Note:** drug testing must not be used as a punitive measure, but as a means to correct behaviour, and to refer for treatment, care and support services.
- Establish or strengthen your school-based support team in order to offer support to learners using alcohol or drugs.

## Tips to help learners resist peer pressure

Peer pressure is one of the main reasons that learners use alcohol and drugs. Learners need quick responses when put under pressure to use alcohol and drugs by their peers. Assist learners to practise the following responses in class:

- "No, I really don't want to."
- "I know the harmful effects of alcohol and drugs and I don't take chances with my body."
- "No thanks, it's against the law."
- "I don't believe in using that stuff."
- "I'm on the team, and we don't use drugs."
- "No thanks, I'm high on life and don't need alcohol/drugs to have fun."
- "I respect myself; I don't want to let my parents down."
- "No thanks, I'm not into chemicals."
- "No, I need all the brains I've got."
- "Ke Moja, I'm fine without drugs."

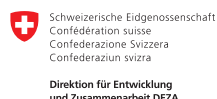
- Establish partnerships with local organisations that learners can be referred to for treatment, care and support.
- Ensure that education continues for learners requiring long-term treatment.
- Advise learners not to stigmatise those addicted to alcohol and drug use; instead offer support and positive peer pressure to overcome the addiction.



## A message to educators on alcohol and drug use

## Integrated School Health Programme

For more information contact the Substance Abuse Helpline  
Toll free number: 0800 12 13 14 or SMS: 32312



basic education  
Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# Taking responsibility for our children's health and wellbeing

## Why is health education important for learners?

The Department of Basic Education is committed to realising the education rights of all children, including the most vulnerable, through schools becoming inclusive centres of learning, care and support.

The Department of Basic Education, in partnership with the Department of Health, is delivering health services for learners in schools. The health services' package includes health education on important health barriers to learning. Identifying health barriers early will improve learners' overall development and assist with their ability to learn.

## Why is it important to identify learners with alcohol and drug use problems?

Alcohol and drug use have many negative effects on the health and wellbeing of learners. It is linked to academic difficulties, absenteeism and school drop-out. It also leads to other problems such as crime and violence, mental and physical health problems, traffic accidents and unprotected sex.

## What are the various categories of drugs?

Drugs are chemicals that change the way our bodies work. In this document, drugs refer to substances that are **legal** (e.g. alcohol, tobacco, over-the-counter medications and household goods such as glue) and **illegal** (e.g. cannabis, methamphetamine, heroin and cocaine).

Drugs affect the central nervous system and can alter mood, thinking and behaviour. Drugs may be divided into four categories:

- **Depressants:** drugs that decrease alertness by slowing down the activity of the central nervous system (e.g. alcohol, analgesics and heroin).
- **Stimulants:** drugs that increase the body's state of arousal by increasing the activity of the brain (e.g. caffeine, nicotine, amphetamines, ecstasy and cocaine).
- **Hallucinogens:** drugs that alter perception and can cause hallucinations, such as seeing or hearing something that is not there (e.g. Lysergic Acid Diethylamide - LSD, 'magic mushrooms').
- **Other:** some drugs fall into the 'other' category, as they may have properties of more than one of the above categories (e.g. cannabis or dagga, which has depressive, hallucinogenic and some stimulant properties).

**Note: Polysubstance use** (using more than one drug at a time), is very common in South Africa and leads to addiction. In addition, heavy use of tobacco and alcohol, known as 'gateway drugs', often lead to use of harder drugs such as cannabis, cocaine and heroin.

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## What are the signs of alcohol and drug use?

- **Changes in level of activity:** periods of tiredness or periods of hyperactivity, lack of coordination, staggering or slow movements, clumsiness and falling.
- **Inaudible or confused speech:** forgetting thoughts or ideas, and illogical conversations.
- **Changes in physical appearance:** drastic changes in style of clothing, less concerned about appearance, which may become careless and untidy.
- **Sudden aggressive and violent behaviour:** unexplained outbursts of anger, restlessness, irritability and destructive behaviour, e.g. punching walls, swearing and fighting.
- **Lack of motivation:** sudden loss of interest in hobbies or sports previously enjoyed and lack of concern about life in general.
- **Severe mood alterations or mood swings:** sudden excitement to sudden feelings of depression, despondency and hopelessness.
- **Alteration in thought patterns:** strange and weird thinking, fearful, abnormal suspiciousness, hallucinations, depressed thoughts and suicidal thoughts.

## Why do learners use drugs and alcohol?

Learners use alcohol and drugs for various reasons that include amongst others:

- To have fun
- To relax and forget problems
- To gain confidence
- To socialise
- To experiment
- As a form of escapism
- To lessen inhibitions
- To remove personal responsibility for decisions
- To celebrate
- To relieve boredom and stress
- To cope with problems
- Peer pressure

Friends, parents, other family members, neighbours and the media can also have an influence over a young person's decision to use alcohol and drugs.