

What can learners do to stay away from alcohol and drug use?

- Participate in Life Orientation lessons on alcohol and drug use at school.
- Take part in peer education programmes such as TADA (Teenagers Against Drug Abuse), Soul Buddyz Clubs, GEM/BEM Clubs or other co-curricular activities such as sports, music, arts and cultural activities.
- Avoid friends who encourage you to experiment with alcohol and drugs.
- Report any alcohol and drug taking and selling on the school premises.
- Approach the School Based Support Team for help if you feel unwell, stressed, sad and/or under any pressure.
- Adhere to, and observe the school policies and code of conduct by making sure that your **school is an alcohol and drug free zone.**

How can learners support their peers/friends who are using alcohol and drugs?

- Don't try to deal with it alone. Find a trusted adult/teacher to talk to, or phone the Substance Abuse Helpline about the best way to go about helping and what the options are.
- Stick by your friend; don't turn your back on them but make it clear what is and isn't acceptable behaviour to you.
- Suggest what they might do, but don't nag. They will make their own decisions.
- Offer to go with them to seek help, or help to make a phone call if they do decide they want help.

Tips to help you resist peer pressure

Peer pressure is one of the major reasons learners are tempted to use alcohol and drugs. Learners may use the following tips to say no to alcohol and drugs:

"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 am 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."

- Find out all you can about the available options for help. Don't bargain with or threaten them.
- Encourage them to believe that they can change and they can do something about their problem.



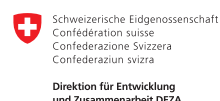
A message to learners on alcohol and drug use

Integrated School Health Programme



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, 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 symptoms 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.