

Substance Use: Addictions and Related Behaviours

Educator discussion guide

This interactive quiz can be facilitated in a few ways (e.g., agree/disagree line, raising hands individually, working in small groups). Choose the method that works best for students.

STUDENT FACING DEBRIEFING SLIDE	EDUCATOR DISCUSSION GUIDE
QUESTION 1: True or false — You have to be 19 years old to use alcohol because it's safe to use at that age.	
<p>False</p> <p>Just because alcohol is legal when you turn 19 doesn't mean it is safe or healthy. There are guidelines to follow because it affects our brains and bodies. Under the age of 25, drinking alcohol or using other substances can be riskier as the brain isn't finished developing yet.</p>	<p>Many substances are legal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some are legal all the time (e.g., caffeine). • Some are legal if you're above a certain age (e.g., in Ontario you currently must be 19 years of age or older to purchase alcohol, cannabis, or vapes and vaping supplies). • Some are legal if they are prescribed to you by a doctor and used as directed (e.g., prescription pain medicine). <p>Just because something is legal does not mean it is safe or healthy. No matter what age you are, there can still be risks, and those risks can be especially high under the age of 25 because the brain isn't finished developing yet. That's why, even when substances are legal, there are still laws for how and where they are used so they don't cause harm (e.g., the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 made all enclosed public places and workplaces like restaurants, bars, and offices, and outdoor spaces like school grounds, playgrounds, and sports fields 100% smoke free).</p> <p>No matter how old you are, if you get a legal substance from someone who isn't supposed to give it to you (e.g., you get prescription medicine from a friend, not a doctor), or you find a substance (e.g., a vape on the ground in a park) there are even more risks as you have no idea where it came from or what is in it.</p>

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<p>QUESTION 1: True or false — You have to be 19 years old to use alcohol because it's safe to use at that age. (continued)</p>	
<p>Teacher script: <i>“Just because you are old enough to use a substance doesn't mean that it is healthy or safe. It's important to remember that even legal substances can harm our health. And if you ever find a vape or another substance, you can't be sure what's in it. Sometimes different substances get mixed together and you can't even tell. This can make them much stronger than you expect, which is very unsafe.”</i></p>	
<p>QUESTION 2: True or false — Most teenagers in Ontario vape.</p>	
<p>False</p> <p>Sometimes social media, marketing or seeing someone vape can make it seem like everyone is doing it, but most teens do not vape.</p> <p>Many teens decide not to vape for a variety of reasons.</p>	<p>This question provides an opportunity for students to consider the factors that influence decisions about vaping and can apply to other substances as well (e.g., media can sometimes glamorize substance use without showing its potential impacts). Take some time to discuss the reasons why someone may or may not choose to use substances—it will support students when responding to the scenarios presented in the consolidation.</p> <p>There are a variety of reasons people may choose not to use substances, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reliable facts and information • health concerns • personal or family values or guidelines • to follow and respect laws/avoid getting in trouble • cultural and religious beliefs • relationships with family, friends, teachers, Elders, and other trusted adults • peer pressure • future goals • saving money • keeping mind clear and focused/doing well at school/in sports • to be a role model for younger siblings or family members <p>Note: refer to the current cycle of the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) for current rates of vaping among Ontario students in grades 7-12.</p>
<p>Teacher script: <i>“Sometimes it can seem like vaping is common, but research shows that most Ontario students in grades 7-12 don't vape. Students are also using fewer substances than they used to, and more students are choosing not to use any substances at all.”</i></p>	

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<p>QUESTION 3: True or false — Just because my friend tried a vape doesn't mean it's safe for me.</p>	
<p>True</p> <p>Everyone reacts to substances differently. The effects can depend on things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • our health, age, and size • what substance is used • how often it is used • how much is used • how we are feeling in our body and mind • our environment • the way our brains and bodies work 	<p>The effects a person may experience will vary, depending on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • genetics • medical history (including family history), health, age, and size • whether we have certain pre-existing health conditions • what substance is used • how often it is used • how much is used • how it is used/taken • our environment (e.g., people, location, circumstances) • whether we've taken any other substances <p>Note: Students may have heard that vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes. Because vaping is still relatively new, researchers are still learning about its long-term health effects. The short-term effects include: mouth or throat irritation, cough, shortness of breath, and nausea. Vaping nicotine or cannabis can also affect brain development, cause addiction, impact learning, and worsen symptoms of depression and anxiety. .</p>
<p>Teacher script: <i>“Substances have varying social, mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical effects. Everyone reacts to them differently. Even when someone we know tries a substance, it's not a guarantee that the same substance will affect us the same way. Some substances can harm us even if we only use them once. The effects can be different each time a substance is used, too.”</i></p>	
<p>QUESTION 4: True or false — Using alcohol or other addictive drugs is a choice. You can choose to stop using them at any time.</p>	
<p>False</p>	<p>Addiction: Substance use can cause chemical changes in the brain and body, which make it very difficult to stop using them. For example, many substances make the brain produce dopamine (a chemical in our brains that makes us feel good). Over time the brain can stop making as much dopamine itself, so without the substance we no longer enjoy fun things or feel good. This can make it very hard to stop using a substance, even if we want to. Certain substances have a higher risk of addiction than others.</p>

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<p>QUESTION 4: True or false — Using alcohol or other addictive drugs is a choice. You can choose to stop using them at any time. (continued)</p>	
<p>Substance use can cause chemical changes in the brain and body, which make it hard to stop.</p> <p>This is called addiction.</p>	<p>When addiction happens, the changes can also affect our self-control and ability to make decisions. They can also make us really want the substance. The feeling can be very strong and difficult to control. That's why sometimes people continue using a substance even though it's causing trouble in their lives. There can be other reasons someone develops an addiction, too, like genetics, what is going on in their lives, building a daily routine around using a substance, and so on.</p> <p>Sometimes there can be messages that addiction is someone's fault. That's because of stigma. Stigma is negative attitudes or ideas about certain things, people, or groups that can lead to unfair judgment. No one would choose to have an addiction, just like no one would choose to have any other type of illness, but stigma can sometimes prevent people from seeking help, if they need it.</p>
<p>Teacher script: <i>"No one would choose to have an addiction, just like no one would choose to have any other type of illness. The information we're learning today can help address stigma about substance use and addiction, which can help people seek support, if they need it."</i></p>	