Grade 8 Drug Education
Lesson 1: Substance Use and Decision-Making: Social Influences, Laws, and Health

This lesson, which is aligned with NL Health curriculum outcomes, contains necessary background information, substance snapshots, learning activities, scenarios, and discussion guides to support delivery of material.

Lesson 1: Substance Use and Decision-Making: Social Influences, Laws, and Health
Lesson 2: Impact of Self-Concept on Substance Use Decisions

Health Curriculum Outcomes

Drug Education

1. To distinguish between facts and myths about drugs and alcohol.
2. To be aware of Canadian laws relating to the possession, use, and sale of alcohol and drugs.
3. To be aware of the dangers of combining alcohol and other drugs.
4. To distinguish between drug use, drug misuse, and drug abuse and drug dependence.
5. To understand some of the reasons for drug and alcohol use.
6. To identify sources of help and information for drug-dependent persons.
7. To have an appreciation of the role of drugs in our society.
8. To distinguish between prescription, non-prescription and illegal drugs.
9. To identify and promote alternative activities not involving alcohol or drugs.
10. To consider personal, societal, and familial values and influences with respect to the use of drugs and alcohol.
11. To be aware of the part that decision-making plays in drug use.
12. To understand some of the health-related implications of drug and alcohol use.
13. To be aware of how the media influences decisions regarding drug and alcohol use.

Emotional And Social Well-Being

1. To use the decision-making process to choose alternate courses of action when dealing with feelings.

Link to Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Curriculum Outcomes

Lesson Snapshot:

Lesson 1: Substance Use and Decision-Making: Social Influences, Laws, and Health
Norms & Expectations

- Learning Activity 1: Understanding Substance Use Choices, Risks and Safety
- Learning Activity 2: Substance Use Safety: Understanding Rules, Regulations and Laws
- Learning Activity 3: Factors Influencing Decision-Making

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Background Information

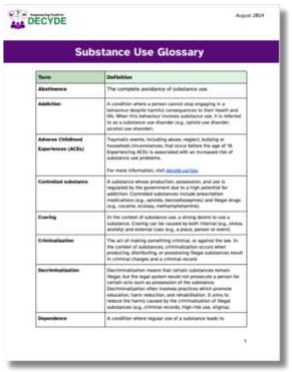
Definition of Drugs

Drugs are substances or chemicals that affect the way our bodies and minds work. Some drugs are medications that help people feel better. They can be used to prevent, cure or alleviate symptoms. Drugs can also be used in unsafe ways. They can affect how the brain works and can have negative effects on the way our body develops and functions. Drugs used unsafely can change the way people feel, think, or behave.

Examples of drugs include:

- Alcohol (e.g., beer, coolers, vodka, whisky, wine)
- Caffeine (e.g., energy drinks, coffee, tea, soft drinks)
- Cannabis or Marijuana
- Hallucinogens (e.g., LSD, Mushrooms)
- Medications (e.g., puffers, epi-pens, fever medications, anti-nausea medications, anti-anxiety medications)
- Nicotine (e.g., tobacco, cigarettes, nicotine vapes)
- Opioids (e.g., codeine, morphine, fentanyl, heroin)
- Over-the-counter medications (e.g., cough syrup, pain medications)
- Stimulants (e.g., nicotine, amphetamines [e.g., Adderall, crystal meth], methylphenidate [e.g., Ritalin], cocaine)
- Vaccinations (e.g., flu, COVID-19, tetanus)

The DECYDE Substance Use Glossary provides a comprehensive collection of key terms and concepts related to substance use. Designed to support educators and mentors, this glossary provides definitions to enhance understanding and communication around substance use topics that are relevant for DECYDE.



SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Substance Snapshots aim to provide educators with information about the various drugs that are incorporated throughout the learning activities. Each snapshot summarizes how the drug is used, its effects, when to seek emergency help, and how to stay safe. The Substance Snapshots are intended to support educators in the delivery of drug education and are not for direct student use unless deemed appropriate.

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Key Considerations

An understanding of the following resources will assist educators as they implement the learning activities.

Use a Skills-Based Health Education (SBHE) Approach

SBHE is a learning approach that uses interactive learning methods. This approach is used throughout the learning activities so students can learn skills that will promote and protect their health and well-being. Refer to the SBHE infographic for more information on SBHE and examples of interactive teaching methods and evaluation.

Incorporate the FACE Decision-Making Model

Throughout all lessons the FACE decision-making model is used to guide discussions and activities. The questions associated with each step of the FACE decision-making model are intended for educator use to probe students during scenario-based learning activities. Refer to the FACE infographics for more information.

Consider Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and implement Trauma-Informed Practices (TIPs) that support harm reduction principles

ACEs are traumatic events that occur before the child reaches the age of 18. Students who experience ACEs have an increased susceptibility to try drugs. This may impact their ability to engage in learning about substances. The ACEs infographic highlights the types of ACEs that may impact youth and offers strategies for educators. Incorporating early drug education and harm reduction principles may encourage youth to make safe and informed choices and reduce potential negative consequences. Understanding the impact of trauma resulting from ACEs will better equip educators to support student learning. The Trauma- Informed Practices (TIPs) infographic provides information on this strengths-based approach for educators.

Support Students Emotional Wellbeing

Discussion about drug or substance use may provoke a range of feelings. Building a positive rapport is vital to effectively engage youth in learning conversations. Respect for students' comments, questions, and concerns surrounding drug use is important regardless of personal opinions. If needed, encourage students to speak with the school's guidance counsellor or another trusted adult. Additional supports are located on the DECYDE website.

Use First-Person Language

Using first-person language that is non-stigmatizing can create an environment that encourages students to engage in conversations or seek help. For more information about stigma and tips for educators, refer to the infographic on Stigma.

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Lesson 1: Substance Use and Decision-Making: Social Influences, Laws, and Health

Learning Activities and Teacher Background Resources

Learning Activity 1: Understanding Substance Use Choices, Risks, and Safety
Learning Activity 2: Substance Use Safety: Understanding Rules, Regulations, and Laws
Learning Activity 3: Factors Influencing Decision-Making

Teacher Resources:

- Substance Snapshots: Cannabis, Inhaled Cannabis, Edible Cannabis, Synthetic Cannabis, Cocaine, Inhaled Nicotine, Alcohol, Depressants, Stimulants, Opioids, Methylphenidate, Naloxone, Mixing Drugs
- Infographics: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Trauma-Informed Practices (TIPs), Substance Use Laws in Canada, Drug Categories, Factors Affecting Decision-Making, Mixing Drugs

Norms and Expectations

While abstinence from drugs is the safest choice for youth to make, discussions about harm reduction are also important. Engaging in educational discussions about substance use can be a protective factor and can positively impact the decisions made by youth. These conversations may touch on sensitive topics for some students. Educators should consider the following: reasons why youth use substances; the harms of substance use; the age and cognitive development of youth; and the context of the school, community, and/or family situations. The sensitive nature of these discussions means teachers should place utmost importance on establishing a safe, supportive, and judgment-free environment. The teacher must promote positive and effective exchanges with students by co-establishing classroom norms that are revisited often.

During these discussions, all participants agree:

- The opinions of everyone are listened to and respected.
- Discussions about the content are factual, open and honest but do not use the names of individuals' experiences. (e.g., refer to "someone I know" rather than using names)
- Boundaries of individuals are recognized and respected.
- Discussions are free of judgemental language and challenge ideas, not individuals.
- Words matter. Avoid stigmatizing language. There should be an established understanding of the term stigma. Teach and model respectful language used during discussions.
    - Important examples include using person-first language. For example, "a person who uses drugs or substances".

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Learning Activity 1: Understanding Substance Use Choices, Risks, and Safety

Learning Activity Objectives:

- Discuss why people may choose to use or not use substances.
- Distinguish between prescription, non-prescription, regulated, and non-regulated substance use.
- Identify the beneficial use of medical drugs.
- Identify the safety considerations associated with substances such as alcohol, cannabis, nicotine, cocaine, psilocybin, methylphenidate, and opioids.
- Identify the safety concerns of combining substances and overconsumption of substances.
- Recognize the role of naloxone in opioid overdose.
- Identify harm reduction strategies, resources, and information for substance use.
- Collaborate respectively with peers.
- Demonstrate positive communication strategies.

Resources:

- Discussion Prompts: **What are drugs?**
- **Pre-activity: Who am I?** Student presentation, teacher discussion guide
- **Exploration: Match UP!** Student cards
- Substance Snapshots: Alcohol, nicotine, cannabis, cocaine, methylphenidate, psilocybin (magic mushrooms), opioids, fentanyl, naloxone, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens
- Infographics: Harm Reduction, Drug Categories, Factors Influencing Decision-Making
- Sharing and Reflection

Introduction

During this learning activity, students will discuss why individuals may make decisions to use substances. They will also explore information such as the risks and harms of substances such as **alcohol**, **nicotine**, **cannabis**, **cocaine**, **methylphenidate**, **psilocybin (magic mushrooms)**, **opioids** such as **fentanyl**, and the possible risks of polysubstance use. Students will also reflect on "stay safer" and harm reduction strategies, including the use of **naloxone**.

SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Teachers may refer to Alcohol, Cannabis, Nicotine, Cocaine, Methylphenidate, Psilocybin, and Opioids to help inform the discussion.

Note: Not for direct student use unless deemed developmentally appropriate.

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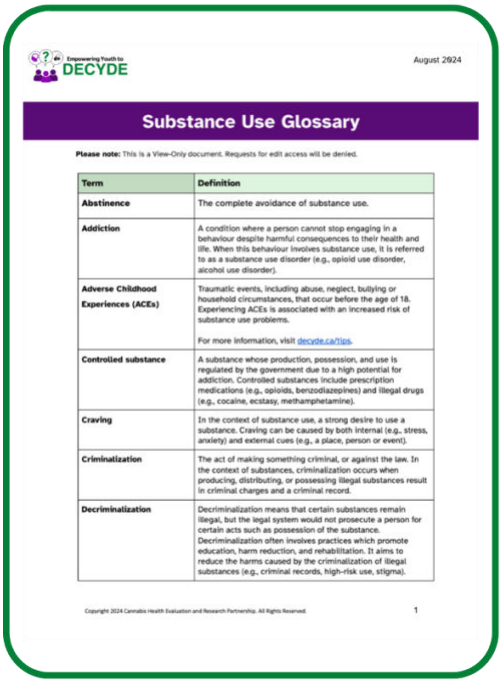
The teacher may wish to refer to the **DECYDE Substance Use Health Glossary** to help inform class discussions.

The Glossary can be accessed **here**.



Empowering Youth to DECYDE

August 2024

Substance Use Glossary

Please note: This is a View-Only document. Requests for edit access will be denied.

Term	Definition
Abstinence	The complete avoidance of substance use.
Addiction	A condition where a person cannot stop engaging in a behaviour despite harmful consequences to their health and life. When this behaviour involves substance use, it is referred to as a substance use disorder (e.g., opioid use disorder, alcohol use disorder).
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	Traumatic events, including abuse, neglect, bullying or household circumstances, that occur before the age of 18. Experiencing ACEs is associated with an increased risk of substance use problems. For more information, visit decyde.ca/tips.
Controlled substance	A substance whose production, possession, and use is regulated by the government due to a high potential for addiction. Controlled substances include prescription medications (e.g., opioids, benzodiazepines) and illegal drugs (e.g., cocaine, ecstasy, methamphetamine).
Craving	In the context of substance use, a strong desire to use a substance. Craving can be caused by both internal (e.g., stress, anxiety) and external cues (e.g., a place, person or event).
Criminalization	The act of making something criminal, or against the law. In the context of substances, criminalization occurs when producing, distributing, or possessing illegal substances result in criminal charges and a criminal record.
Decriminalization	Decriminalization means that certain substances remain illegal, but the legal system would not prosecute a person for certain acts such as possession of the substance. Decriminalization often involves practices which promote education, harm reduction, and rehabilitation. It aims to reduce the harms caused by the criminalization of illegal substances (e.g., criminal records, high-risk use, stigma).

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As an opening to the conversation on substance use, engage the students in a discussion about "**What Are Drugs?**". Gauge students' current understanding and views by engaging them in a discussion about drugs and why individuals may use them. The teacher may use the Drug Categories Infographic as a guide.

- ❑ Provide students with several sticky notes or small pieces of paper. Indicate that you will pose a question after which, they are to brainstorm and write down whatever comes to mind. Begin the activity by asking, **"*What are drugs*"**?

- ❑ Ask them to indicate one thought per sticky note. Allow students sufficient time to jot down their thoughts. Remind them that there are no wrong answers for this activity.

The teacher may use the following prompts to help guide student thinking:

Discussion Prompts

- What are examples of drugs?
- Distinguish between prescription drugs and non-prescription drugs.
- Why do you think people use other types of drugs, like alcohol, nicotine or cannabis?
- Discuss regulated drugs. Why are they regulated?
- What are different types of drugs?
- What is the purpose of drugs? Why do people take prescription drugs? Over-the-counter drugs?
- What are examples of illegal drugs? Why are they illegal?
- What is an unregulated drug?
- What are some considerations about using unregulated drugs?

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- ❑ Students may then work with a partner to share their ideas. Invite students to organize their thoughts and create a definition or explanation.

- ❑ Follow up with a whole class discussion providing opportunities for each group to share their definitions. Refer to the previous discussion prompts. Arrange a "Parking Lot" on a wall in the classroom where students may park their sticky notes with their ideas and definitions for future reference.

Pre-Activity: Who Am I?

This pre-activity can be used as a pre-assessment to determine students' knowledge of the following substances: Alcohol, cannabis, nicotine, cocaine, methylphenidate, psilocybin (magic mushrooms), opioids (e.g., fentanyl). Naloxone for opioid overdose will also be included.

Using the ***Who Am I?*** presentation, teachers will engage students in a learning conversation about the different substances to be explored throughout the lesson**.** The possible risks of **polysubstance use or mixing drugs** and **overconsumption** will be discussed along with other substance use terminology. Working in groups, students will collaborate with team members to determine the best possible answer.

This activity is available as a Canva presentation and PDF and can be accessed **here**.

- ❑ Arrange students in groups/teams of 3 or 4. Provide each group with 4 cards labelled A, B, C and D.
- ❑ Explain the activity. Using the ***Who Am I?*** learning activity, students will collaborate with their team members to determine which drug is described. They will select one answer from a series of multiple choice questions A, B, C, or D.
- ❑ Once the question has been read and presented, allow think-time for each group to discuss and come to a consensus on a group answer.
- ❑ Once time is up, each group will show the card which corresponds to what they believe is the correct answer.
- ❑ Model an example with students.

The **Who Am I? Teacher Discussion Guide** will provide accompanying explanations and *Did You Know* information with each slide. Teachers may select and sequence the order of slides to suit their classroom context. Teachers may also decide to use this presentation at different points throughout the lesson to reinforce student understanding.

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Example for teacher to model with class:

Question 1

I am a colourless liquid that you can drink. I am an intoxicating substance. I am often considered a regulated substance.

A. Antifreeze

B. Cleaning Products

C. **Ethanol**

D. Moonshine

Explanation: Ethanol is the type of alcohol that is contained in drinking alcohol. Regulated alcohol, such as beer, wine, and coolers, can be purchased in liquor stores. Antifreeze, cleaning products, and moonshine also contain types of alcohol that are not regulated for drinking and can be harmful. Regulated drugs are substances that are controlled and monitored by the government to ensure they are used safely, legally, and appropriately.

Did You Know: There are also other types of alcohol. These are NOT safe! Isopropyl or rubbing alcohol is used in sterilization agents, such as hand sanitizer or cleaning products. Methyl alcohol, methanol or wood alcohol is found in products such as antifreeze and fuel for camping stoves.

Post-Activity Discussion

- ❑ Invite students to share anything new they may have learned or that surprised them, or any other information they think they know about the substances or concepts presented.
- ❑ Discuss with the students the different categories of drugs such as Regulated or Unregulated. The teacher may choose to reference the ~~Drug Categories~~ infographic.
- ❑ Encourage students to identify some of the potential safety concerns of the substances discussed, including alcohol, cannabis, nicotine, cocaine, methylphenidate, psilocybin (magic mushrooms), opioids (e.g., fentanyl).

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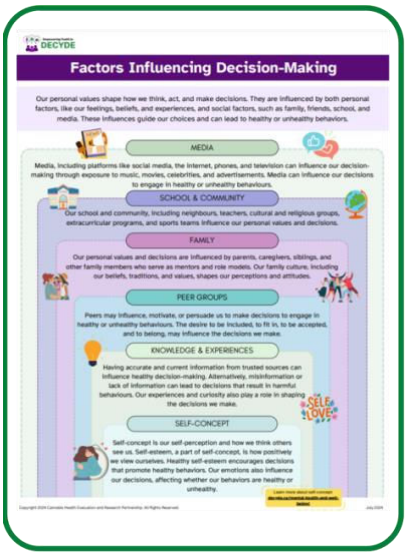
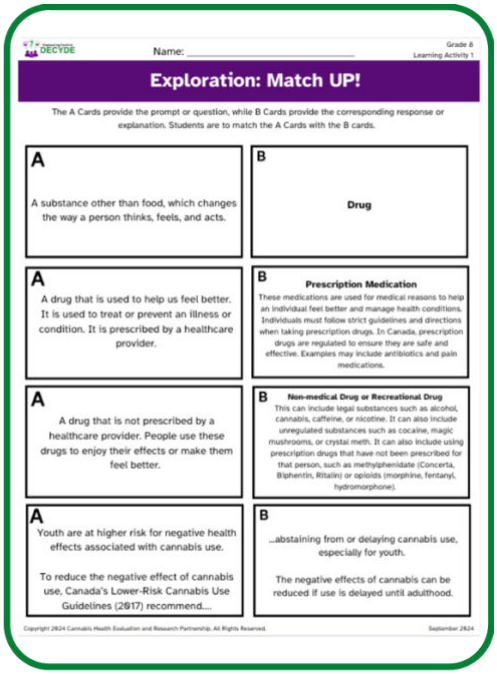
- ❑ Discuss the reasons why youth may choose to use these substances. The teacher can refer to the **Factors Influencing Decision-Making Infographic** which highlights the various influences on decisions. Our decisions are influenced by both personal factors, like our feelings, beliefs, and experiences, and social factors, such as family, friends, school, and media. These influences guide our choices and can lead to healthy or unhealthy behaviors.



Exploration: Match UP!

Following the conversation about why youth may decide to use substances, invite students to work with a partner or small groups to complete **the "Match UP!" learning activity**. The intent of this activity is to encourage student discussion and to reinforce student knowledge and understanding of concepts and terminology related to substance use.



The teacher may use the entire collection of cards or select the cards they wish students to use for this matching activity. [Note: The cards have to be prepared in advance, and each group will require one set each of **A Cards** and **B Cards**.] The **A Cards** provide the prompt or question, while **B Cards** provide the corresponding response or explanation. Students are to match the A Cards with the B cards.

The cards are available as a PDF.

The teacher may select from among several variations for this activity:

- ❑ **Variation 1:** Students work in pairs. Student A has all the A Cards and Student B has the B Cards. Student A will read their cards and Student B will search among their cards for the corresponding response. Students may switch roles to allow opportunities for both students to ask and find the responses.
- ❑ **Variation 2**: Students arrange the A Cards and B Cards randomly and face-up on a table, then work together to find the matching pairs of cards. Students will require ample space for this variation.

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- ❑ **Variation 3:** Students arrange all cards randomly, face down on a table. They will match A Cards with B Cards as they turn them face-up. Students will require ample space for this variation.

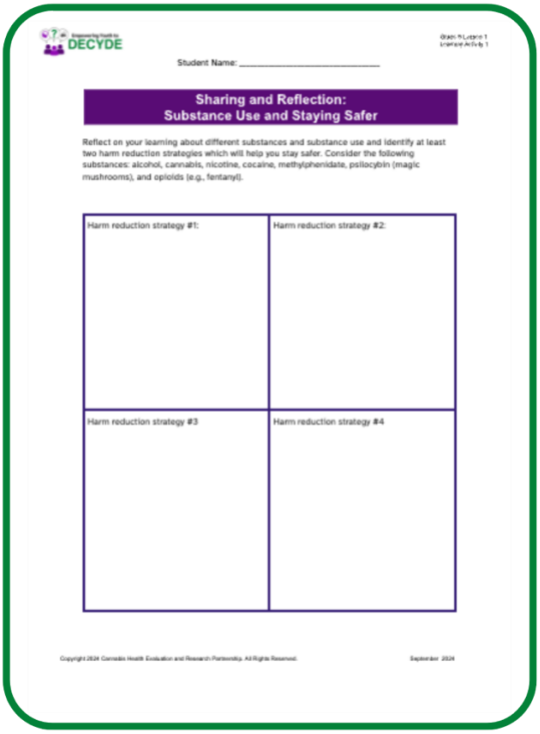
Model this activity with students before they begin, depending on the variation selected. The teacher should monitor student discussions to verify their understanding. Follow up with a whole class discussion to review students' responses. Engage students in a conversation to confirm their understanding of:

- The distinction between regulated and non-regulated substance use
- Beneficial use of certain drugs
- The risks associated with substances such as alcohol, cannabis, nicotine, cocaine and opioids
- The risks of polysubstance use and the risks of overconsumption
- The role of naloxone in an opioid overdose
- Evidence that students understand "staying safer" or harm reduction strategies

Sharing and Reflection

Group Sharing: Invite each group to revisit the **Match UP!** learning activity**.** Ask them to review the activity cards and highlight at least 5-10 new pieces of information that they learned. Each group will share with the whole class.

Individual Reflection: Substance Use and Staying Safer. Students will reflect on their learnings about the substances and substance use and identify at least two harm reduction or staying safer strategies which help youth make safer choices. Consider the following substances: alcohol, cannabis, nicotine, cocaine, methylphenidate, psilocybin (magic mushrooms), opioids (e.g., fentanyl). Invite students to share their responses. During the whole class sharing, students may add to their individual reflections.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Student Name: _____

Sharing and Reflection: Substance Use and Staying Safer

Reflect on your learning about different substances and substance use and identify at least two harm reduction strategies which will help you stay safer. Consider the following substances: alcohol, cannabis, nicotine, cocaine, methylphenidate, psilocybin (magic mushrooms), and opioids (e.g., fentanyl).

Harm reduction strategy #1:	Harm reduction strategy #2:
Harm reduction strategy #3	Harm reduction strategy #4

The Reflection Card is available as a **Google Doc** and **PDF**.

SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Students may refer to Alcohol, Cannabis, Nicotine, Cocaine, Methylphenidate, Psilocybin, and Opioids to help inform the discussion.

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Learning Activity 2:
Substance Use Safety: Understanding Rules, Regulations & Laws

Learning Objectives

- Recognize that there are Canadian and international laws pertaining to the use, sale and possession of regulated substances, including nicotine, alcohol, and cannabis, and unregulated substances such as fentanyl analogues, cocaine, and magic mushrooms.
- Apply and discuss how substance use laws protect the health and well-being of people in different situations.
- Reinforce understanding of the safety concerns with substance use.
- Discuss the factors that may influence decision-making regarding substance use as it pertains to laws, rules, and regulations.
- Review harm reduction strategies pertaining to substance use.
- Collaborate respectively with peers
- Demonstrate positive communication strategies.

Resources

- Discussion Prompts
- **Applying Rules and Laws: How Savvy Are We?** Student Version and Teacher Discussion Guide [Note: This activity needs to be prepared by the teacher]
- Substance Snapshots: Alcohol, Cannabis, Cocaine, Methylphenidate, Psilocybin, Opioids, Fentanyl and Fentanyl Analogs, Naloxone
- Infographics: Substance Use Glossary, Factors Influencing Decision-Making, Substance Use Laws in Canada, Drug Categories, Harm Reduction

Introduction

In Learning Activity 2, students will consider government laws and rules and regulations in the community, at school, and at home which influences decision making. They will recognize Canadian and international laws relating to the sale, possession, and use of drugs and alcohol. Using a variety of situations, students will apply these laws, rules and regulations to substances and substance use, including both regulated and unregulated substances (e.g., alcohol, nicotine, cannabis, cocaine, psilocybin, fentanyl).

Teachers may wish to revisit and review the previously established classroom norms. Emphasize their importance and if necessary, adapt by changing or adding new norms.

Introductory Discussion:

- ❑ Revisit concepts discussed in Learning Activity 1

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- Drug Categories such as drugs, prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, regulated drugs, unregulated drugs, illegal drugs. The teacher may use the Drug Categories Infographic to guide the discussion.
- Reasons why individuals may use substances likes drugs and alcohol.
- Risks and potential harms of using substances.
- Beneficial use of certain drugs.

❑ Introduce Learning Activity 2 by engaging students in a conversation to determine their understanding of rules, laws and regulations that they encounter at school, at home, in the community, and why these exist. Encourage students to think about how these laws impact their own lives and communities, and what might happen if such laws didn't exist. Teachers can use the Substance Use Laws in Canada infographic as a guide.

The teacher may use the following prompts to help guide student thinking:

Discussion Prompts

- What are some rules and guidelines that exist in your school? In the community? At home?
- Brainstorm examples of laws or regulations that exist in your community:
  - trespassing, loitering, littering, recycling and garbage collection, non-smoking areas, accessible parking zones, wearing helmets, wearing seatbelts, using car seats for infants and toddlers, minimum age for tanning salons
- What do you believe is the purpose of having rules and regulations in general?
- What are examples of laws or regulations related to substance use that you know? Think about smoking, vaping, cannabis, alcohol or other drugs.
- Why do you think there are laws and regulations around the use, sale, and possession of substances like nicotine, alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs?
- What is the purpose of these rules, regulations and laws?
- How do these rules and laws help protect people's health and well-being?
- How might these laws differ between Canada and other countries, and why do you think that is?

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- ❑ Invite students to record examples of community regulations and laws that they are aware of. Share these examples with the class. During discussions, students may debate the accuracy of the suggestions. Throughout the lesson, invite students to do a fact check to verify their accuracy and share with their classmates. Review reliable and unreliable sources of information with students. Guide them to where they could find accurate and reliable sources of information relevant to their suggestion. Some possible locations of accurate information:
    - Government of NL
    - Health Canada
    - Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction
    - Government of Canada
    - Occupational Health and Safety NL
    - Tobacco Control Laws
    - Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

Exploration: Applying Rules and Laws: How Savvy Are You?

Working with a partner or in small groups, students will engage in the activity **Applying Rules and Laws: How Savvy Are You?** This activity allows students to review brief situations where they will consider the implication of rules, regulations, and laws when making decisions. Students will consider the influences of family, school, and government laws in each situation.

This activity is available as a PDF or Google Doc. The Teacher Discussion Guide is available here.

Name: _____

Grade 8 Learning Activity 2

Applying Rules & Laws: How Savvy Are You?

Table Rules

Rules, regulations, and laws are put in place to help us avoid harm and conflict and protect and keep us safe. With your group, discuss each scenario and determine the safest decision to make. During your conversations, consider the following:

- Which laws, rules or regulations do you think individuals may consider in each situation? Along with Government laws, consider the rules and regulations for your school, community and family.
- What factors may affect decisions in each scenario?
- Why do you think governments, communities, schools, and organizations believe these laws, rules and regulations are necessary?
- Share your personal views and opinions.

Scenario 1

Morgan lives in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). They are 18 years old. They want to buy a case of beer at the local corner store.

Morgan's cousin, who is also 18, lives in Alberta. He wants to buy a case of beer and stay home and watch the hockey game with his friends.

Scenario 2

Owen overhears their parents talking about their friend's daughter. She had been at a house party and had unknowingly consumed fentanyl. The daughter's friends called 911, who were able to help her in time. They administered naloxone and were able to save her.

Scenario 3

Max's friends are hanging out playing video games since his family is away for the evening. He takes out a bottle of vodka to share with his friends. Danielle is tempted. However, she had taken medication for a headache earlier. Danielle also drove her dad's car to Max's house.

Scenario 4

Riley is enjoying the weekend at their family cabin. They want to go exploring on their ATV. They have been drinking beer all afternoon but insist they feel ok to drive the ATV. They plan to avoid the main roads.

- ❑ Provide groups with the Situation cards and guiding questions (prepared in advance for each group). The teacher may not use all situations and opt to select specific situations pertinent to their classroom context.
- ❑ Provide students with the Substance Use Laws in Canada infographic to help guide their discussion.

For each situation card, students will reflect on the guiding questions below:

- Which laws, rules or regulations do you think individuals may consider in each situation? Along with Government laws, consider the rules and regulations for your school, community, and family.
- What factors may affect decisions in each scenario.
- Why do you think governments, communities, schools, and organizations believe these laws, rules, and regulations are necessary?
- Share your personal views and opinions.

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Monitor group discussions to verify student understanding and clarify any misinterpretations.

Using the Teacher Discussion Guide, the teacher may choose to model the first scenario:

Scenario 1

Morgan lives in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). They are 18 years old. They want to buy a case of beer at the local corner store.

The legal age in NL to purchase or consume alcohol is 19 years old.
The legal drinking age is 19 in all provinces/territories except Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec, where it is 18.

Morgan's cousin, who is also 18, lives in Alberta. He wants to buy a case of beer and stay home and watch the hockey game with his friends.

The legal age in Alberta to purchase or consume alcohol is 18 years old.
18 years is also the legal drinking age in Manitoba and Quebec. Provinces and territories may have different laws and regulations; always obey the laws of the province you are in.

Following this learning activity, engage students in a conversation to:

- Invite students to share any situations that:
  - Were challenging to determine the applicable rules and laws.
  - Were of particular interest or importance to them.
- Review any community rules or regulations they encountered.
- Review any home rules that could affect decision making.
- Review the laws related to substances and their use they encountered.
- Talk about why and any of the above exist to help protect youth.
- Invite students to debate any rules, regulations or laws that they wish to challenge.
- Remind students of the classroom norms during these discussions.

Sharing and Reflection

❑ Class Discussion

Reinforce that the safest option is to NOT engage in substance use. However, there are ways to stay safer using harm reduction strategies when consuming any type of substance. Have an honest and frank class discussion highlighting these strategies as students share the strategies they identified for staying safe. Teachers may refer to the Harm Reduction infographic to guide the discussion.

The teacher may have students choose from one of the following as a reflection activity:

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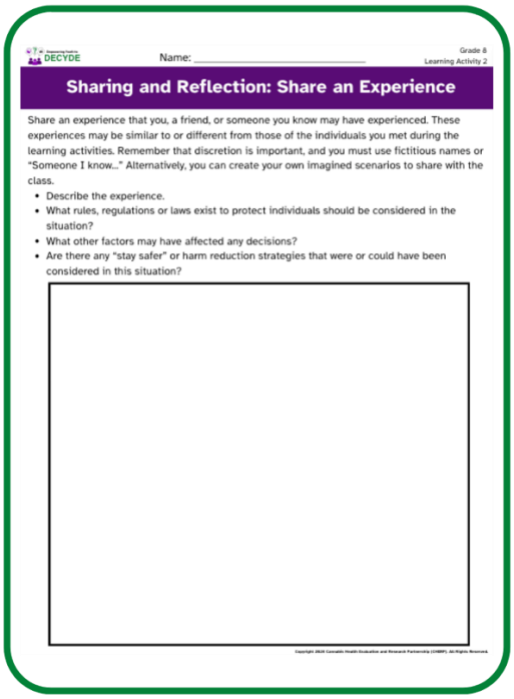
- 1) **Share an Experience.** Share an experience that you, a friend or someone you know may have experienced. These experiences may be similar or different from those of the individuals you met during the learning activities. Remember that discretion is important, and you must use fictitious names or "Someone I know….". Alternatively, you can create your own imagined scenarios to share with the class
  - Describe the experience.
  - What rules, regulations or laws which exist to protect individuals should be considered in the situation.
  - What other factors may have affected any decisions?
  - Are there any "stay safer" or harm reduction strategies that were or could have been considered in this situation?

  This is available as a Google Doc and PDF.


Name: _____ Grade 8 Learning Activity 2

Sharing and Reflection: Share an Experience

Share an experience that you, a friend, or someone you know may have experienced. These experiences may be similar to or different from those of the individuals you met during the learning activities. Remember that discretion is important, and you must use fictitious names or "Someone I know…" Alternatively, you can create your own imagined scenarios to share with the class.

- Describe the experience.
- What rules, regulations or laws exist to protect individuals should be considered in the situation?
- What other factors may have affected any decisions?
- Are there any "stay safer" or harm reduction strategies that were or could have been considered in this situation?

- 2) **Staying Safer**. Working with a partner, imagine that you are part of a youth community group trying to promote messages about the potential risks of substance use and how to stay safer around substance use. Consider the important messages should youth hear to be better informed when making decisions to use or not use these substances.
  - Focus on one or two substances.
  - What are the potential harms and consequences of using these substances?
  - How can youth stay safer around these substances?

  This is available as a Google Doc and PDF.

Name: _____ Grade 8 Learning Activity 2

Sharing and Reflection: Staying Safer

Working with a partner, imagine that you are part of a youth community group trying to promote messages about the potential risks of substance use and how to stay safer around substance use. Consider the important messages youth should hear to be better informed when making decisions to use or not use these substances.

- Focus on one or two substances.
- What are the potential harms and consequences of using these substances?
- How can youth stay safer around these substances?

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Learning Activity 3: Factors Influencing Decision-Making

Learning Objectives

- Examine the influences that affect decision-making about substance use, including media, community, family, peers, knowledge and experience, and self-concept.
- Discuss the influence of laws, rules, and regulations as enforced by government, family, school and community on decision-making.
- Discuss protective and risk factors that can influence substance use and decision-making.
- Review the safety considerations associated with substances such as alcohol, cannabis, nicotine, cocaine, psilocybin, methylphenidate, and opioids.
- Reinforce the safety considerations of polysubstance use and overconsumption in different situations.
- Identify harm reduction strategies regarding substance use.
- Review the difference between regulated and unregulated substances.
- Collaborate respectively with peers.
- Use critical thinking skills.

Materials

- **Quiz-Quiz-Trade:** Student Version, Teacher Discussion Guide
- **Substance Snapshots**: Alcohol, Cannabis, Cocaine, Methylphenidate, Psilocybin, Opioids, Fentanyl and Fentanyl Analogs, Naloxone
- **Infographics:** Substance Use Glossary, Factors Affecting Decision-Making, Substance Use Laws in Canada, Protective & Risk Factors, Harm Reduction, Mixing Drugs
- **Exploration Activity**: **Choices & Influential Factors** (Student Version, Teacher Discussion Guide)
  - Situation 1: Quinn and Taylor – Unregulated Cannabis Vape
  - Situation 2: Morgan and Samira – Polysubstance Use: Alcohol and Methylphenidate
  - Situation 3: Lee and Riley – Unknown Substances: Cocaine and Fentanyl
  - Situation 4: Charlie and Jamie – Alcohol and Driving
  - Situation 5: Kit and Brook – Cannabis and Driving
  - Situation 6: Harper and Olowin – Alcohol Drinking Challenge
  - Situation 7: Danielle and Friends – Polysubstance Use: Alcohol and Magic Mushrooms
- **Sharing and Reflection:** Journalling

Introduction

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Revisit and review classroom norms. Emphasize their importance and if necessary, adapt by changing or adding new norms.

Opening Activity: Quiz-Quiz-Trade

To review students' understanding of substances and concepts and knowledge of the risks of consuming unknown substances, use the cooperative learning strategy, ***Quiz-Quiz-Trade*** as a formative assessment activity.

- Provide each student with a question card.
- Students circulate in the room. At a moment indicated by the teacher, students stop and pair up with a classmate.
- Students quiz each other by reading the question on their cards. **(Quiz-Quiz)**
- Students then exchange cards. **(Trade)**
- At the teacher's signal, they move on until the teacher signals them to stop and pair up with a different classmate.
- Students repeat this several times.

This activity is available as a PDF.

The **Quiz-Quiz-Trade Teacher Guide** with explanations for the questions can be found here.

DECYDE

Grade 8
Learning Activity 3

Quiz-Quiz Trade

Each student is given a question card. Students circulate the room and pair up with a classmate. Students quiz each other by reading the question on their cards. (Quiz-Quiz). Students then exchange cards. (Trade). At the signal, they move and pair up with a different classmate.

Question 1

What is the safest harm reduction strategy when using any substance?

Question 2

If you decide to drink alcohol, name two "stay safer strategies" that would reduce harm.

Question 3

Your friend is trying cannabis for the first time. What would you suggest to ensure they stay safer?

Question 4

Drinking too much alcohol on a single occasion is known as _____. This can be very harmful. Some effects include impulsive, aggressive behaviour, poor concentration and judgment, forgetfulness or even loss of memory, and slowed reaction time.

Question 5

Alex thinks that taking his younger brother's ADHD medication will help him concentrate better for an upcoming Math exam. This is not true. Using _____ drugs, such as methylphenidate (e.g., Concerta, Ritalin, Biphentin) not intended for you can lead to addiction and can be very harmful. You should never use a family member's medication.

Question 6

Alli takes methylphenidate. This drug really helps with her ADHD symptoms, such as allowing her to focus. She doesn't drink alcohol because she knows that her medication could be less effective. Drinking alcohol with stimulants like methylphenidate can cause alcohol poisoning and heart problems. Mixing alcohol with other substances, such as prescription medication, is an example of _____.

Following the activity, have a class discussion. Ask students to each share their questions and responses. Discuss and confirm responses and confirm students' understanding. Clarify any misunderstandings students may have. Focus this post-activity discussion on harm reduction, or 'staying safer' strategies that students may have learned about through completing the learning activity, or some they may already know. Teachers may wish to refer to the Harm Reduction, Mixing Drugs, and Substance Use Laws in Canada infographics and the Substance Snapshots to guide the discussion.

Exploration Activity: Choices & Influential Factors

Prior to beginning the Exploration activity, invite students to consider the factors that may affect their decision-making. Teachers may share the Factors Influencing Decision-Making infographic with the students.

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- Ask students to recount and record the activities they completed from the time they woke up in the morning. They can include the time they got up, what they ate for breakfast, what clothes they wore, etc. The teacher may do the same. Students may share their activities with a partner. Ask them to reflect on all the decisions and choices they already made today.
- Discuss with students the decisions they made and what may have influenced them, noting that some decisions take more consideration than others.
- Brainstorm with students a list of factors that influence the decisions they make. Record their ideas, then highlight those that students feel are the most relevant or influential.
- Explain to students that when we make decisions, we consider both the consequences and the influential factors. Together you will be exploring situations related to substance use, which involve more time and consideration throughout the decision-making process.

During the **Exploration Activity: Choices & Influential Factors**, students will engage in conversations discussing detailed scenarios. Working with a partner, or in small groups, students will explore the influential factors related to making decisions about substance use (e.g., media, community, family, peer groups, knowledge and experiences, and self-concept).

- Invite students to work in groups of 2 or 3 to allow for input from all students during discussion.
- Provide each group with 1 or 2 scenarios and the **Choices & Influential Factors** Google Doc or PDF to record their responses.
- Invite students to assign roles to each member of their groups (Spokesperson, Notetaker and Time Manager).
- Model and discuss an example scenario with students to ensure they have a clear understanding of the task.
- Monitor student conversations during group work.

Discussions: Engage the class in a conversation about each scenario. Invite spokespersons from each group to share their discussions and learnings. Allow time for input from all students. Using examples from the scenarios or student experiences, ask students to share and review with students.

The **Choices & Influential Factors Teacher Guide** with explanations for the scenarios can be found here.

Sharing and Reflection

During the exploration activity, students examined situations and considered the factors and consequences that may have influenced the decisions that various youth made around substance use. Students may now reflect on their learning in a journal activity.

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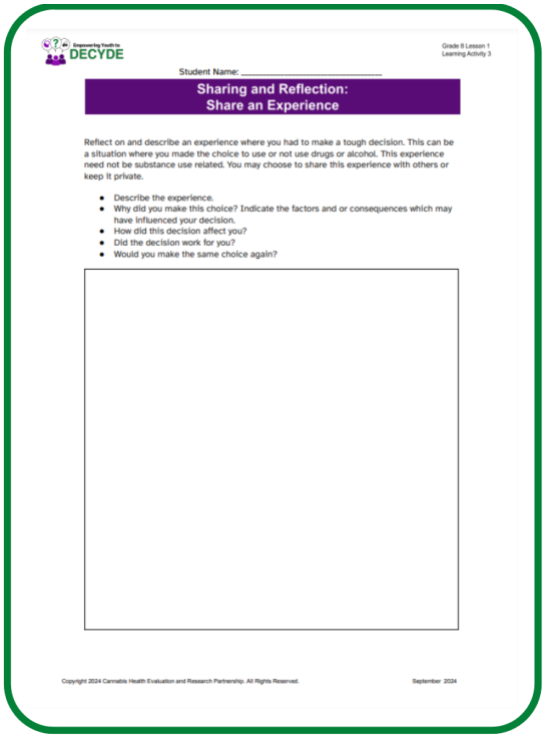
Journalling: Ask students to reflect on and describe an experience where they had to make a decision which they thought was challenging for them. This experience may or may not be substance use related. Students should describe the experience, indicating the factors and or consequences which may have influenced their decisions. Students may choose to share this experience with others or keep it private.

This activity is available as a Google Doc and PDF and can be accessed here.



Empowering Youth to DECYDE

Grade 8 Lesson 1
Learning Activity 3

Student Name: _____

Sharing and Reflection:
Share an Experience

Reflect on and describe an experience where you had to make a tough decision. This can be a situation where you made the choice to use or not use drugs or alcohol. This experience need not be substance use related. You may choose to share this experience with others or keep it private.

- Describe the experience.
- Why did you make this choice? Indicate the factors and or consequences which may have influenced your decision.
- How did this decision affect you?
- Did the decision work for you?
- Would you make the same choice again?

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September 2024

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Content Created by the Cannabis Health Evaluation and Research Partnership (CHERP) Team at Memorial University

DECYDE stands for Drug Education Centred on Youth Decision Empowerment. Through this project, our Cannabis Health Evaluation and Research Partnership (CHERP) team of pharmacists, educators, researchers, and students at Memorial University who wish to support substance use education for youth. We further collaborate with a diverse panel of youth in Newfoundland and Labrador who collaborate with the team on creating the DECYDE content.

The key goals of our project are to:

- Provide substance use education that emphasizes harm reduction principles.
- Provide youth with information and support the development of decision-making skills about substance use.
- Provide youth with the knowledge and skills to make safe and informed decisions surrounding substance use.
- Provide educators with accessible and easy-to-follow lesson plans that contain valid and reliable information.

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