

Grade 6 Drug Education

Lesson 2: Impact of Substance Use on Growth & Development



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

Health Curriculum Outcomes

Drug Education

1. Recognize the potential for addiction to substances, like tobacco and alcoholic beverages.
2. Practice problem-solving and decision-making skills for preventing substance use.
3. Discuss the personal and societal cost of smoking, drinking and other drug use.
4. Identify different substances and their effects on health and well-being.
5. Practice problem-solving and decision-making skills for preventing substance use

Relationships

1. Identify ways of developing positive relationships with peers.
2. Demonstrate effective communication skills.

[Link](#) to Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Curriculum Outcomes

Lesson Snapshot:

Lesson 2: Impact of Substance Use on Growth & Development

- Norms & Expectations
- Learning Activity 1: What is Health and Wellness?
- Learning Activity 2: Substance Use Spectrum and Factors Affecting Intoxication
- Learning Activity 3: Long-term Impacts of Drugs on Health and Wellness



Lesson 1: Making Sense of Substances: Understanding Drugs and Their Effects.

Lesson 2: Impact of Substance Use on Growth & Development

Lesson 3: Health and Societal Impacts of Smoking and Vaping

Background Information

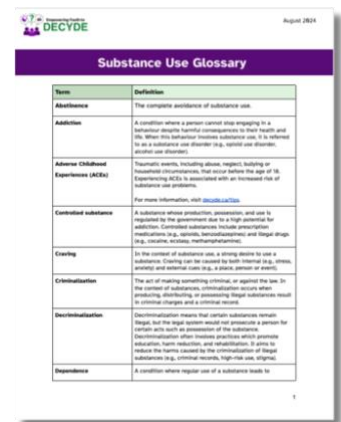
Definition of Drugs

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.



Term	Definition
Abstinence	The complete avoidance of substance use.
Addiction	A condition where a person cannot stop engaging in a behavioral activity, despite consequences to one's health and life. When this behavior involves substance use, it is referred to as substance use disorder (e.g., severe and chronic alcohol use disorder).
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	Typically 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 .
Controlled substance	A substance whose production, possession, and use is regulated by the government and is a high potential for addiction. Controlled substances include prescription medications (e.g., opioids, benzodiazepines) and illegal drugs (e.g., cocaine, heroin, marijuana/cannabis).
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 drink, smell, or sight).
Criminalization	The act of making something criminal, or against the law. In the context of substance use, 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 must not prosecute a person for certain acts such as possession of the substance. Decriminalization can involve decriminalizing personal use, harm reduction, and rehabilitation. It aims to reduce the harm caused by the criminalization of illegal substances (e.g., criminal records, high-risk use, stigma).
Dependence	A condition where regular use of a substance leads to



[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](#).

Lesson 2: Impact of Substance Use on Growth & Development



Learning Activities and Teacher Background Resources

Learning Activity 1: What is Health and Wellness?

Learning Activity 2: Substance Use Spectrum and Factors Affecting Intoxication

Learning Activity 3: Long-term Impacts of Drugs on Health & Wellness

Teacher Resources:

- Substance Snapshots: [Alcohol](#), [Cannabis \(inhaled\)](#), [Caffeine](#), [Nicotine \(inhaled\)](#), [Antihistamines](#), [Mixing drugs](#), [Stimulants](#)
- Infographics: [Health and Wellness Infographic](#)

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".

Learning Activity 1: What is Health and Wellness?



Learning Activity Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

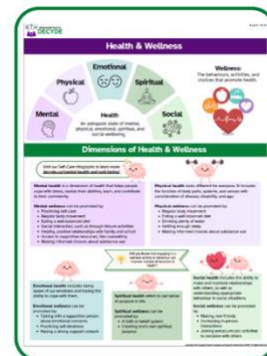
- identify the five (5) dimensions of health and wellness: mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and social.
- Practice decision-making skills when making informed choices about their health and well-being, with an emphasis on personal responsibility in avoiding harmful substances.
- Explore how different factors, such as the amount consumed, body size, sex, emotional state, and rate of consumption, can influence the effects of substances.
- Collaborate respectfully with peers.

Resources:

- Introduction
 - [Health and Wellness Infographic](#)
 - Discussion Prompts
- Pre-Activity: Recorded Medication
 - Video: [8-Minute Beginners Meditation](#)
- Exploration Activity: Wellness Quest: Exploring Health in All Dimensions [**Note: this activity requires preparation in advance**]
 - [Self-Care Infographic](#)
 - [Health and Wellness Activity Cards](#)
 - Student Worksheets: [Wellness Quest Booklet](#)
- Sharing and Reflection: Personal Wellness Plan
 - [Personal Wellness Plan](#)

Introduction

Introduction to the five (5) dimensions of Health and Wellness: **Physical, Mental, Emotional, Spiritual, and Social**. Begin with a discussion with students about health and wellness. Teachers can provide students with a copy of



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the [Health and Wellness Infographic](#) (focusing on the first page), which will be used throughout this learning activity.



The following **discussion prompts** may be used to help guide the discussion:

- What does being "healthy" mean to you? Can you think of different ways a person can be healthy besides just not being sick?
- The five dimensions of health and wellness are physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. Can you give examples of some day-to-day actions which fit into one or more of these categories?
- Which dimension of health do you think is the easiest to take care of? Which one do you think can be the most challenging? Why?
- Do you think these five parts of health are connected? How can one affect the others?
- What are some habits or activities that help improve your overall health and wellness? Which dimensions do they support?

Pre-Activity: Recorded Meditation

Before moving into the exploration activity, take some time to go through this recorded meditation with the students. Explain to students that every day we take care of our bodies by eating, moving, and sleeping, but we don't always take time to care for our minds. Meditation is a way to do that — it helps us relax, focus, and feel calmer. Some people use it to handle stress, improve their mood, or just take a break from all the noise around them.

Ensure students are comfortably seated, and there are minimal distractions. It is suggested that the teacher does the meditation alongside the students.

Video: [8-Minute Beginners Meditation for Kids, Preteens, Teens, and Classrooms](#) (7:56)



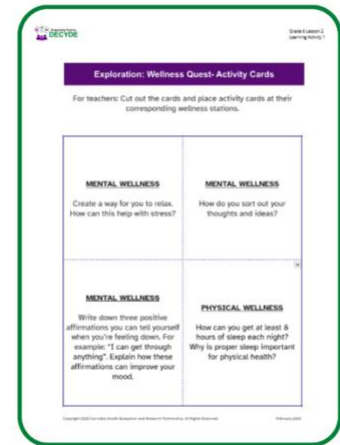
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Exploration: Wellness Quest: Exploring Health in All Dimensions

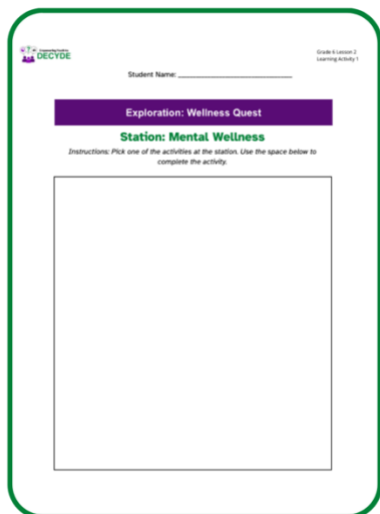
In this exploration activity, students will understand and explore different aspects of health and wellness—mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social—through interactive activities and discussions. Teachers may find it helpful to refer to both the [Health and Wellness](#) and [Self-Care](#) infographics for this exercise, available on the DECYDE website.

Teachers will set up **five** stations around the classroom, each dedicated to one of the wellness categories. Label each station clearly: **Mental, Physical, Emotional, Spiritual, Social**. At each station, teachers will place the corresponding Activity Cards, available as a [PDF](#) on the DECYDE website [**Note: these will need to be prepared in advance**]. Each Activity Card includes an activity or discussion prompt for students to complete while they are at that station. Provide pens/pencils at each station for students to write or draw their answers to the Activities.



Start with a brief discussion on the importance of health and wellness in all areas of life. Explain that each station will help them explore a different aspect of wellness. Divide students into small groups and assign each group to a station to begin.

Each group will rotate through the five wellness stations. Spend about 5-8 minutes at each station. At each station, students will:



- **Pick one or two of the Activity Cards.**
- **Complete the activity or discussion task.**
- **Encourage creativity and teamwork.**
- **Use the student worksheet for students to write or draw their answers.**

Students will use their copy of the Health and Wellness Infographic and Wellness Quest Booklet to complete this activity (available as [PDF or Google Doc](#) on DECYDE site).

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Each station will include the following possible activities for students to choose from:

Mental Wellness:

1. Create a way for you to relax. How can this help with stress?
2. How do you sort out your thoughts and ideas?
3. Write down three positive affirmations you can tell yourself when you're feeling down. For example: "I can get through anything". Explain how these affirmations can improve your mood.

Physical Wellness:

1. How can you get at least 8 hours of sleep each night? Why is proper sleep important for physical health?
2. What is your favorite physical activity to blow off steam, OR What is something you enjoy doing that makes you feel good?
3. Plan a balanced meal that includes fruits, vegetables, protein, and whole grains. Describe how each food group benefits your body.

Emotional Wellness:

1. List five things you are grateful for. Explain how being thankful helps with emotional wellness.
2. Write about a time when you felt proud of yourself and why.
3. What emotions do you struggle with most? What are some things you do to help with your emotions?

Spiritual Wellness:

1. Where do you think your morals and values came from? Who taught you about what is right and wrong?
2. Draw or describe a personal belief or value that guides you.
3. Brainstorm on a small act of kindness you could do for someone. How would this make you feel? How does it reflect your spiritual beliefs?

Social Wellness:

1. How can you be there for a friend who is going through a hard time? What would you do if you noticed they are not acting like themselves, have no appetite, or are missing school or activities they usually enjoy?
2. List three things you like about your friends. Why are these qualities important to you?

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3. Draw a map showing the people you can turn to for help (e.g., family, friends, teachers). Describe how having a support system impacts you.

After completing all stations, each group will pick one of the wellness areas to present what they learned or created at the station to the class. This could be in the form of a short presentation, discussion, or skit. For example, a group might demonstrate their relaxation technique from the Mental Wellness station or share their drawing from the Spiritual Wellness station.

Conclude with a class discussion. Ask questions such as:

- “Which wellness area did you find most interesting and why?”
- “How can you apply what you learned about wellness in your daily life?”
- “What are some ways to support friends in their wellness journey?”

Sharing and Reflection: Personal Wellness Plan



Have students create a “**Personal Wellness Plan**” on a piece of paper, where they set 3 goals based on what they learned. Each goal should belong in one of the 5 dimensions of wellness. Students will be provided with a short summary of each of the dimensions of wellness on their Student Worksheet, available as a PDF or Google Doc [PDF or Google Doc](#).

For each goal they write down, students will answer the following questions:

1. What dimension of wellness does this belong to?
2. How will you achieve this goal?

Learning Activity 2: Substance Use Spectrum and Factors Affecting Intoxication



Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Discuss the range of choices from safe (abstaining from drugs) to risky behaviours related to substance use
- Identify factors that can affect intoxication (e.g., amount consumed, speed of consumption, sex, body size, emotional state).
- Assess the risks and benefits of substance use by thinking critically about the choices they make.
- Collaborate respectfully with peers.

Resources:

- Introduction:
 - Infographic: [Substance Use Spectrum](#)
- Pre-Activity: Applying the Substance Use Spectrum
 - [Substance Use Spectrum Scenario Cards](#)
- Exploration Activity: Factors Affecting Intoxication (Spin the Bottle Activity)
 - Infographic: [Factors Affecting Intoxication](#)
 - [Factors Affecting Intoxication Scenario Cards](#) [**Note: Teachers will need to prepare this in advance**]
- Sharing and Reflection: Safer Choices Poster Campaign
 - Student Worksheet - [Safer Choices Poster Campaign](#)
- Substance Snapshots: [Alcohol](#), [Cannabis \(inhaled\)](#), [Caffeine](#), [Nicotine \(inhaled\)](#), [Antihistamines](#), [Mixing drugs](#)

Introduction

This learning activity will focus on the **spectrum of substance use** and **factors influencing intoxication**. Start with a discussion about what a substance use spectrum is and how it can show a range of behaviors from safest to riskiest. Teachers can use the [Substance Use Spectrum infographic](#) to introduce this concept to the students and inform the discussion. Explain that the first activity will



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involve creating a Substance Use Spectrum to understand the varying levels of risk associated with substance use.

Pre-Activity: Applying the Substance Use Spectrum



In this activity, students will create their own "**Substance Use Spectrum**" to understand the range of choices from safe (abstaining from drugs) to risky behaviors related to substance use, and recognize the importance of making safer choices. Teachers can draw the spectrum for students or display the [Substance Use Spectrum Infographic](#). Discuss the examples provided. Explain how each behavior or choice is placed on the spectrum based on its level of risk or safety. Emphasize that abstaining from substance use is the safest choice, and substance use disorder (or addiction) is the riskiest.

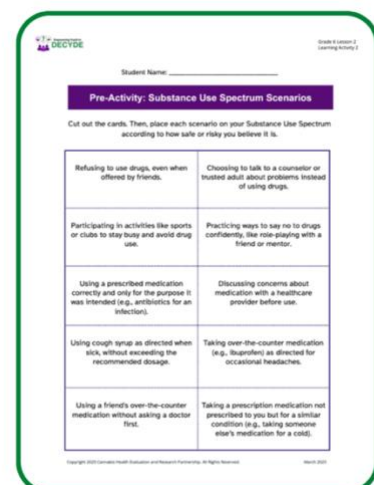
Examples:

- **Non-Use:** Choosing to spend time with friends without using substances and make healthy choices together.
- **Beneficial Use:** Using prescribed melatonin under doctor supervision to aid in sleep.
- **Lower-Risk Use:** Using energy drinks occasionally to stay awake for studying.
- **Higher-Risk Use:** Taking multiple doses of an over-the-counter cold medicine to feel a stronger effect.
- **Addiction/Substance Use Disorder:** Prioritizing substance use over responsibilities like school, work, or family, leading to serious consequences.

Divide students into small groups (3-4 students per group). Provide each group with a large piece of poster paper, markers, and the provided substance use spectrum scenarios (available as a [PDF](#)).

Each group will:

- Cut out the scenario cards from the PDF (or the teacher can cut out ahead of time).
- Draw their own Substance Use Spectrum on the poster paper, labeling one end "Non-Use" and the other end "Substance Use Disorder or Addiction"



Student Name: _____

Pre-Activity: Substance Use Spectrum Scenarios

Cut out the cards. Then, place each scenario on your Substance Use Spectrum according to how safe or risky you believe it is.

Refusing to use drugs, even when offered by friends.	Choosing to talk to a counselor or trusted adult about problems instead of using drugs.
Participating in activities like sports or clubs to stay busy and avoid drug use.	Practicing ways to say no to drugs confidently, like role-playing with a friend or mentor.
Using a prescribed medication correctly and only for the purpose it was intended (e.g., antibiotics for an infection).	Discussing concerns about medication with a healthcare provider before use.
Using cough syrup as directed when sick, without exceeding the recommended dosage.	Taking over-the-counter medication (e.g., ibuprofen) as directed for occasional headaches.
Using a friend's over-the-counter medication without asking a doctor first.	Taking a prescription medication not prescribed to you but for a similar condition (e.g., taking someone else's medication for a cold).

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- Discuss and place each scenario on their spectrum according to how safe or risky they believe it is. They can use sticky notes to adjust their placements as they discuss.
- Create additional scenarios they think of and add these to their spectrum.

Substance Use Spectrum Scenarios (Teacher Guide)

<p>Non-Use (Safest)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deciding not to use substances when offered to you. 2. Choosing to talk to a counselor or trusted adult about problems instead of using drugs. 3. Participating in activities like sports or clubs to stay busy and avoid substance use. 4. Practicing ways to avoid using substances, like role-playing with a friend or mentor.
<p>Beneficial Use</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using a prescribed medication correctly and only for the purpose it was intended (e.g., antibiotics for an infection). 2. Discussing concerns about a medication with a healthcare provider before use. 3. Using cough syrup as directed when sick, without exceeding the recommended dosage. 4. Taking over-the-counter medication (e.g., ibuprofen) as directed for occasional headaches.
<p>Lower-Risk Use</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using a friend's over-the-counter medication without asking a doctor first. 2. Taking a prescription medication not prescribed to you but for a similar condition (e.g., taking someone else's medication for a cold). 3. Trying a drug one time but not regularly using it (e.g., trying a friend's prescription medication). 4. Using medication in a manner not prescribed, such as taking a higher dose than recommended for faster relief.
<p>Higher-Risk Use</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taking a prescription in higher doses than prescribed (e.g., painkillers). 2. Mixing prescription drugs with alcohol or other substances. 3. Using stimulant drugs (e.g., Adderall) without a prescription to help you with school work. 4. Using substances, such as alcohol or cannabis, before school or work.
<p>Addiction/Substance Use Disorder</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regularly using substances (e.g., cocaine, heroin, alcohol, cannabis) and experiencing negative health issues or legal problems.

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2. Combining multiple types of substances, leading to dangerous physical and mental health effects.
3. Buying illegal drugs from other people in order to get access to the drug.
4. Using drugs that puts other people at risk, such as driving under the influence of drugs.

After, have each group present their Substance Use Spectrum to the class. They should explain why they placed each behavior or scenario in its position on the spectrum and discuss the reasoning behind their decisions. Encourage groups to highlight any scenarios they found particularly challenging to categorize and discuss why.

SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Teachers may refer to the [Alcohol](#), [Cannabis \(inhaled\)](#), [Caffeine](#), [Nicotine \(inhaled\)](#), [Antihistamines](#), and [Mixing drugs](#) Substance Snapshots to help inform the discussions.

Exploration Activity: Factors Affecting Intoxication Spin the Bottle

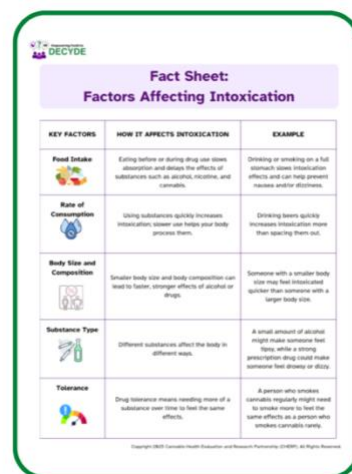


Note: Teachers will need to cut out the different [scenario cards](#) before beginning the activity, available as a [PDF](#).

In this Exploration activity, students will learn about the various factors that impact how intoxication affects the body through an interactive "Spin the Bottle" game.

In this activity, students will explore how different factors, such as body weight, food intake, and substance type, influence intoxication levels and health. Begin with a discussion on the factors that impact how intoxication affects the body, using the [Factors Affecting Intoxication Fact Sheet](#) (available as a [PDF](#)). Provide a copy to each student to inform the discussion. Explain that students will explore these factors through a game called "Spin the Bottle."

Students will sit in a circle and will take turns spinning the bottle. The student the bottle points will pick up a scenario card. The student will read the scenario aloud and discuss how the factors in the scenario could impact intoxication.



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After each spin, facilitate a class discussion about the factors affecting intoxication. Use a whiteboard or chart paper to summarize key points from each scenario and fact.

The teacher discussion guide is available as a [PDF](#).

Sharing and Reflection: Safer Choices Poster Campaign



For this reflection activity, students will create an awareness poster that encourages safer choices regarding drug use and intoxication.

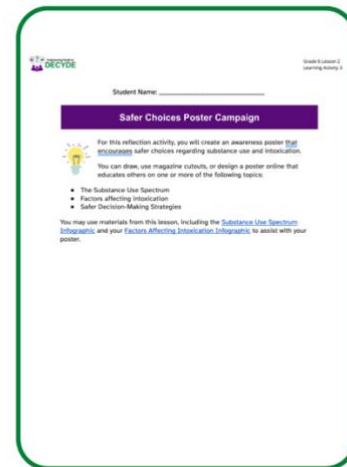
Students can draw, use magazine cutouts, or design a poster online that educates others on one or more of the following topics:

- The Substance Use Spectrum
- Factors Affecting Intoxication
- Safer Decision-making Strategies

Students may use the resources from this lesson, including the [Substance Use Spectrum](#) and [Factors Affecting Intoxication](#) Infographics to assist with their poster.

Encourage creative slogans, powerful imagery, or even poetry in their designs. Posters can be displayed in the classroom or school hallways to spread awareness.

The student instructions for this activity are available as a [PDF](#) or [Google Doc](#).



Learning Activity 3: Long-term Impacts of Drugs on Health and Wellness



Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Discuss the long-term impacts of substance use on the five dimensions of health and wellness (mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and social).
- Recognize the importance of supporting friends and family in making positive choices regarding substance use.
- Recognize effects of substance use on the brain and body and any impairments to ongoing and future development (mind altering, risk of addiction, slow reaction time, negative mental health).
- Collaborate respectfully with peers.

Resources:

- Introductory Activity: Step Into the Future
 - [Step into the Future Statements - Canva Presentation](#)
- Exploration Activity
 - [Time Machine Scenario Cards](#)
 - Scenario 1: The Teen Drinking Crisis
 - Scenario 2: The Youth-Led Wellness Campaign
 - Scenario 3: The City that Never Changed Its Smoking Laws
 - Scenario 4: Jay's Two Futures – Finding Support and Confidence
- Sharing and Reflection: Time Capsule
 - [Time Capsule Student Worksheet](#)
- Substance Snapshots: [Alcohol](#), [Cannabis \(inhaled\)](#), [Nicotine \(inhaled\)](#), [Stimulants](#), [Caffeine](#)

Introduction: Step into the Future

In this activity, students will gain an understanding of the long-term effects of substance use and the importance of making healthy decisions to promote wellbeing.

Begin this activity with the following interactive “[Step into the Future](#)” Game (available as a [Canva Presentation](#)). This game will help students understand



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the long-term health consequences of different substances through an engaging, movement-based activity.

First, set up the game area. Teachers will define a starting line on one side of the classroom, and a finish line at the other end of the classroom. Students start at the "Present" (Starting Line). The "Finish Line" represents a healthy future with no substance-related health issues. Each student represents a person making different choices about substance use. Explain that some choices help us move forward toward a healthier future, while others hold us back or cause setbacks. Students will take steps forward, stay in place, or move backward based on different substance use effects.

Gameplay:

- Read out Future Outcome statements one at a time.
- If the effect is positive, students take one or two steps forward.
- If the effect is negative, students step backward or stay in place.



SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Teachers may refer to the [Alcohol](#), [Nicotine](#), [Cannabis](#), and [Stimulants](#) Substance Snapshots to help inform the discussions.

Step into the Future Statements:

1. You choose to avoid vaping, and your lung health remains strong. → Take two steps forward.
2. You use alcohol every day, leading to liver damage over time. → Take one step backward.
3. You quit smoking, and your risk of lung cancer decreases significantly over the years. → Take one step forward.
4. You start using cannabis regularly as a teen, and your memory and concentration are affected. → Take one step backward.
5. You decide not to try vaping, and your brain develops without the effects of nicotine. → Take two steps forward.
6. You start vaping every day, and your brain becomes dependent on nicotine, making it harder to focus in school. → Take one step backward.
7. You use caffeine energy drinks to stay awake during school and for studying, and over time, this leads to heart issues. → Take one step backward.
8. You take prescribed medications only as directed, improving your health. → Take two steps forward.
9. You misuse painkillers, leading to addiction and difficulty going to school. → Take one step backward.
10. You start drinking alcohol every day, and over time, it affects your memory and ability to make good decisions. → Take one step backward.

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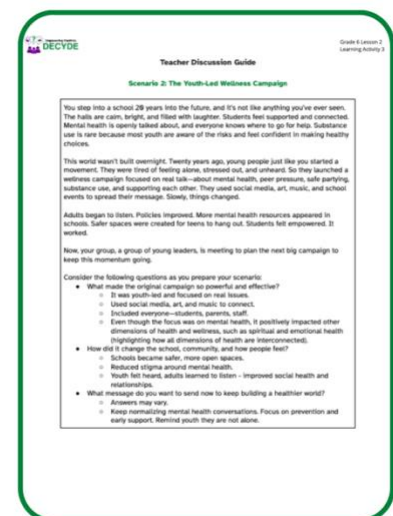
11. You surround yourself with supportive friends who help you make healthy choices. → Take two steps forward.
12. You decide to wait until you're older to drink, and you develop healthier coping strategies for stress. → Take one step forward.
13. You smoke cigarettes for several years, and now you struggle with shortness of breath when playing sports. → Take one step backward.
14. You stop vaping before it becomes a habit, and your ability to concentrate in class improves. → Take one step forward.
15. You try vaping to deal with stress, but over time, you feel more anxious and irritable, so you decide to quit. → Take one step forward.
16. You never start smoking, and your risk of heart disease stays low as you grow older. → Take two steps forward.
17. You start using nicotine as a teen, and over time, you have trouble remembering things and learning new skills. → Take one step backward.
18. You quit smoking, and after a few years, your lungs heal, making it easier to exercise and breathe deeply. → Take one step forward.
19. You use vaping as a way to fit in with friends, but you develop a strong nicotine addiction that makes quitting very difficult. → Take one step backward.
20. You learn healthy ways to manage stress instead of using substances, leading to better mental health in the long run. → Take one step forward.

Exploration: Time Machine

In this exploration activity, students will explore the long-term impacts of substance use and the importance of making healthy choices by discussing different scenarios through a time machine concept. Students will use the [Substance Fact Sheets](#) available as PDFs on the DECYDE website.

Before beginning the activity, the class will design a “Time Machine” out of a large cardboard box or create a simple backdrop on a poster board. Students can decorate it with futuristic elements like stars, gears, or clocks.

Begin with a discussion about the concept of a time machine and how it could show us different possible futures based on our choices today. Explain that the activity will use



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the time machine to explore the consequences of substance use and the benefits of making healthy choices.

Teachers may model the following scenario for the students, with the Teacher Discussion Guide for the model scenario below. The Teacher Discussion Guide for the rest of the scenarios is [available as a PDF](#).

Model Scenario: A School Changed by Vaping

It's 10 years from now, and you're walking through the halls of your old middle school. Everything looks the same, but something about the school feels different.

Ten years ago, vaping became a lot more common among students. Small nicotine pens were easy to hide and easy to get. Social media made vaping seem cool and harmless. At first, no one really paid attention. Students vaped in bathrooms, in class, even during recess. Teachers didn't say anything, and there were no school policies saying that students couldn't vape.

Over time, more students became sick. Students were coughing, losing focus, and struggling with mood swings. Attendance dropped. Learning got harder. Teachers and students stopped trusting each other. The school responded with stricter rules, but it only created more tension. The fun, connected energy of school life faded.

Now, your group, made up of students, teachers, and caregivers, has come together to understand what went wrong and what can be done to rebuild a healthier, more supportive school environment.

Consider the following questions as they discuss the scenario, keeping all five dimensions of Health and Wellness in mind (**Physical, Mental, Emotional, Spiritual, and Social**).

- What led to the vaping issue getting out of hand?
 - People believed vaping was harmless.
 - Students had easy access to vape pens and flavored cartridges.
 - There was a lack of education and awareness about the risks to physical health.
 - Adults didn't take early warning signs seriously.
 - Peer pressure and social media glamorized vaping.
- How did it affect student health and school life over time?
 - Students developed physical health issues like chronic coughing, breathing problems, and nicotine addiction.

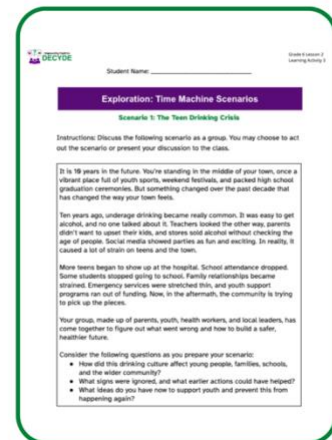
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- It influenced mental health, and it became harder for students to concentrate in class and keep up with schoolwork. It disrupted learning, increased absences, and academic challenges.
 - Students missed more days of school due to illness or disciplinary action.
 - Trust between teachers and students broke down, impacting social and emotional health.
 - The school atmosphere shifted from safe and supportive to tense and rule-focused.
- What could the school and community do now to help?
 - Provide honest, age-appropriate education about vaping and addiction.
 - Create safe spaces for students to talk openly about peer pressure and stress.
 - Build stronger relationships between teachers and students based on trust, not punishment.
 - Offer healthy alternatives and after-school programs that build connection, focusing on improving social, spiritual, and emotional health.
 - Involve families in prevention efforts and communication strategies.

Divide students into 4-5 groups and provide each group with one of the following [Scenario Cards](#) (available as PDF).

Each group will act out or discuss their scenario as a group. After discussion, each group will take turns traveling in the time machine and presenting their scenario to the class.

Encourage creativity in their responses, whether they are role-playing or discussing. They can use props or costumes if available.



Students can use their resources from previous activities (including the [Health and Wellness](#), [Substance Use Spectrum](#), and [Factors Affecting Intoxication](#) Infographics) to help inform their scenarios. Encourage students to consider all five dimensions of Health and Wellness: **Physical, Mental, Emotional, Spiritual, and Social**.

After each group has explored their scenario, have them present their findings to the class. They should explain the scenario they drew, how it relates to substance use, and the lessons learned

Write their responses on the board, categorizing them into Physical, Mental, Emotional, Spiritual, and Social effects.

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Examples of long-term impacts include:

- **Physical:** Heart disease, liver damage, lung disease, poor immune system.
- **Mental:** Addiction, depression, difficulty concentrating.
- **Emotional:** Anxiety, stress, difficulty regulating emotions.
- **Spiritual:** Low self-esteem, no sense of connection to self.
- **Social:** Broken relationships, legal issues, losing friends, impacting school/work performance.

Conclude with a class discussion about the different scenarios. Ask questions such as:

- “What were some common themes in the scenarios you explored?”
- “How can making healthy choices today impact your future?”
- “What can you do to help educate yourself and others to stay safer when using substances?”

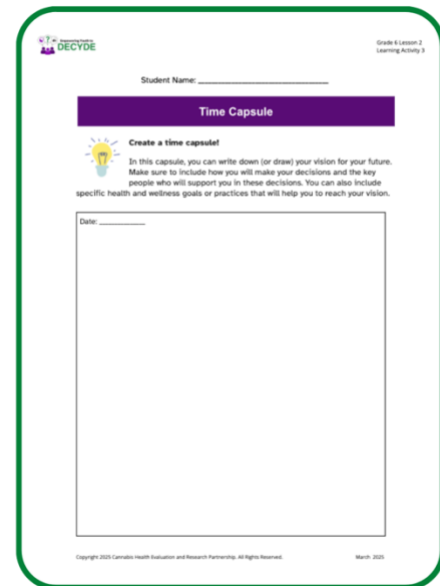
Sharing and Reflection: Time Capsule

For this activity, students will create a time capsule, where they state their intentions for the future and why, including how they made their decisions

and what supports and habits will help them to reach their goals.

Students will date them and put them away to revisit a few years later. Teachers may choose to provide envelopes for students, and can plan to return the time capsule to students at the end of the year, or if possible, to keep for longer. This would be ideal to open in grade 9/10 as a reminder as they start to experience a different level of peer relationships and different choices regarding substance use.

The worksheet is available as a [PDF and Google Doc](#).



The worksheet is titled "Time Capsule" and is part of the "DECYDE" program. It includes a student name line, a title bar, and instructions: "Create a time capsule! In this capsule, you can write down (or draw) your vision for your future. Make sure to include how you will make your decisions and the key people who will support you in these decisions. You can also include specific health and wellness goals or practices that will help you to reach your vision." Below the instructions is a large empty box for writing, with a "Date:" label and a line for the date. The footer contains copyright information: "Copyright 2025 Cannabis Health Evaluation and Research Partnership. All Rights Reserved. March 2025".

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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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