

DRUG CATEGORIES

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Medical drug: (Medication)

- A medication which helps someone feel better;
- used to treat or prevent an illness or condition.

Examples:

Prescription drugs such as antibiotics, inhalers, or cannabis; over-the-counter drugs such as some fever medication or cough syrup.



Non-medical drug:

- A drug is NOT used to treat an illness or condition for that person.

Examples:

Nicotine found in cigarettes and vapes; alcohol; caffeine, cocaine; cannabis

- A drug prescribed for one person but being used by another person for a non-medical reason.

Examples:

Methylphenidate, opioids, benzodiazepine

Legal drug:

- A drug such as prescription drugs and over the counter drugs are legal;
- A non-medical drug such as caffeine;
- Other non-medical drugs may be legal, but have age restrictions.



Examples:

Alcohol, cannabis, nicotine

Illegal drug:

- A drug that has not been prescribed by a healthcare provider nor regulated by the government;
 - A drug that is unlawful to use;
 - A drug which is unsafe to use.

Examples:

Cocaine, ecstasy, heroin



Although certain drugs are legal, there are age restrictions. For example, alcohol and cannabis are legal for adults to use, but illegal for children and teenagers. This means that people under the age of 19 (in Newfoundland and Labrador) cannot lawfully possess or consume these drugs. Brains are developing until the age of 25. Therefore, it is important to protect our brains and prevent damage for as long as possible. Other drugs, such as caffeine, is legal for everyone, but not recommended for children because it may not be safe.



For more information on laws surrounding substance use in Canada, visit:
decyde.ca/educational-materials/#substance-use



SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Teachers may refer to Substance Snapshots to help inform the discussion. Note: Not for direct student use unless deemed developmentally appropriate:
decyde.ca/substance-snapshots/