TEACHER DISCUSSION GUIDE

Substance Use and Health: True or False

1. **Substances (ex. cannabis, alcohol, nicotine) will have the same effect on my health regardless of what age I start using them.**
   False. We should be delaying using substances for as long as possible. Brain growth and development happens into the mid-twenties, and substance use can have a harmful impact on this process. The risk for developing problematic substance use and associated harms later in life increases significantly when substance use is initiated young.

   Reference: Richmond-Rakerd, L. S., Slutske, W. S., Lynskey, M. T., Agrawal, A., Madden, P. A. F., Bucholz, K. K., Heath, A. C., Statham, D. J., & Martin, N. G. (2016). Age at first use and later substance use disorder: Shared genetic and environmental pathways for nicotine, alcohol, and cannabis. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 125*(7), 946–959. https://doi.org/10.1037/abn0000191

2. **Polysubstance use (using multiple substances), either at the same time or on different occasions, is a risk factor for developing a substance use disorder.**
   True. Polysubstance use, or using more than one drug at a time, increases the risk of developing substance use disorder (SUD). This disorder affects how a person thinks, acts, and feels, leading them to keep using drugs even when it causes problems. When teens use multiple substances, they are more likely to face long-term problems like addiction and mental health issues as they get older.

   Reference: Czoli, C., Luongo, G., & Mischki, T. (2023, April 19). *Characterizing polysubstance use: What do we know about use of cigarettes, vaping products, cannabis, and alcohol among Canadians? Health Reports* (Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 82-003-X), 34. https://doi.org/10.25318/82-003-x202300400002-eng

3. **Polysubstance use is not very common.**
   False. Polysubstance use was reported by 12.2% of Canadians (3.8 million people), with higher prevalence among young adults, men, and individuals who vaped. The most common substance combination among these users was inhaled cannabis combined with weekly or daily alcohol consumption (29.0%, or 1.1 million people).

   Reference: Czoli, C. D., Luongo, G., & Mischki, T. (2023, April 19). *Characterizing polysubstance use: What do we know about use of cigarettes, vaping products,*

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TEACHER DISCUSSION GUIDE

Substance Use and Health: True or False

cannabis, and alcohol among Canadians? Health Reports, (82-003-X, Catalogue No. 82-003-X202300400002), 34. https://doi.org/10.25318/82-003-x202300400002-eng

4. **In Canada, you are considered to be driving impaired if you have a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 percent.**
   True. Across Canada, fully licensed drivers must have a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) below 0.08. There is also zero tolerance for alcohol and cannabis for drivers under the age of 22 years old.

   Reference: Government of Alberta. (n.d.). *Federal penalties for impaired driving*. Alberta.ca. Retrieved July 18, 2025, from https://www.alberta.ca/federal-penalties-for-impaired-driving
   Department of Justice Canada. (2021, July 7). *Impaired driving laws*. Justice.gc.ca. Retrieved July 18, 2025, from https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/sidl-rlcfa/

5. **In Canada, the only substance that can be measured for impaired driving is alcohol.**
   False. In addition to alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, LSD, psilocybin, ketamine, PCP, methamphetamines, GHB and 6MAM (an indication of heroin use) levels can be measured to determine impairment while driving.

   Reference: Department of Justice Canada. (2021). *Impaired driving laws*. Justice.gc.ca. Retrieved July 18, 2025, from https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/sidl-rlcfa/#:~:text=ml%20of%20blood.-,Other%20drugs,of%20driving%20is%20also%20prohibited

6. **In Newfoundland and Labrador, the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit is 0.08% for everyone who has a driver's license.**
   False. Newfoundland and Labrador has a **zero-tolerance policy** for novice drivers. If you are under the age of 22 years old, you must have a blood alcohol content of 0% while driving. Novice drivers and drivers under the age of 22 will have their vehicles immediately impounded for one week if they are found to have a BAC greater than zero but less than 0.08.

   Reference: Criminal Code Help. (n.d.). *Impaired driving (Newfoundland and Labrador)*. CriminalCodeHelp.ca. Retrieved July 18, 2025, from

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Substance Use and Health: True or False

https://www.criminalcodehelp.ca/offences/impaired-driving-by-province/impaired-driving-newfoundland-labrador/

7. **Some types of alcohol can be good for your health.**
   False. No types of alcohol (ex. beer, wine, liquor, cider) are good for your health. Alcohol has negative health effects on everyone regardless of age, sex, gender, ethnicity, tolerance level, etc.

   Reference: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (2023). *Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health*. Retrieved July 18, 2025, from https://www.ccsa.ca/en/canadas-guidance-alcohol-and-health

8. **In Canada, alcohol recommendations are the same for males and females.**
   True. At low and moderate levels of alcohol use, both sexes experience harm. At higher levels of alcohol use, females do have more health risks. Also, due to physiological differences, males tend to be able to drink more before they feel intoxicating effects of alcohol. However, males tend to take more risks, experience more injuries, and are more violent than females when they drink, therefore recommendations are now the same for both sexes.

   Reference: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (2023). *Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health*. Retrieved July 18, 2025, from https://www.ccsa.ca/en/canadas-guidance-alcohol-and-health

9. **It is safe to drink alcohol if you are breastfeeding.**
   False. Alcohol enters breast milk within 30 to 60 minutes after drinking, which means breastfeeding infants can be exposed to alcohol through the milk. Alcohol can also decrease the amount of breastmilk that is produced.

   Reference: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (2021). *Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health*. Retrieved July 18, 2025, from https://www.ccsa.ca/canadas-guidance-alcohol-and-health

10. **Cannabis can be addictive.**
    True. People who use cannabis regularly (daily or almost daily) and over several months/years can become dependent on cannabis and can experience withdrawal symptoms when they stop using. Psychological withdrawal symptoms may include:

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Substance Use and Health: True or False

craving, irritability, anxiety, difficulty sleeping, depression, etc. Physical withdrawal symptoms may include: abdominal pain, shakiness, sweating, chills, and headache.

Reference: Canadian Public Health Association. (2018). *Is cannabis addictive? Evidence brief* [PDF]. https://cpha.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/resources/cannabis/evidence-brief-addictive-e.pdf

11. **Greening out and cannabis-induced psychosis is considered the same thing. False.** Greening out is the over-intoxication of cannabis which may cause nausea and vomiting, and paranoia and anxiety. Substance-induced psychosis is a medical disorder in which people may experience psychosis symptoms for up to a month, brought on by using cannabis or other substances. This usually follows heavy use of highly potent cannabis. Symptoms of psychosis include: hallucinations (seeing/hearing/feeling/smelling/tasting things that aren't actually real), delusions, unable to concentrate, disordered thinking (jumping between random topics), and unresponsiveness.

    Reference: Schizophrenia Society of Canada. (2018). *Cannabis & Psychosis: Exploring the Link*. Retrieved July 22, 2025, from https://cannabisandpsychosis.ca/

12. **Certain people have a higher risk of developing cannabis-induced psychosis than others.**

    True. Most people who use cannabis do not develop psychosis or schizophrenia. However, if you are genetically predisposed to these conditions, your risk of developing cannabis-induced psychosis and/or schizophrenia increases drastically. There are different factors that may influence a person's risk of developing cannabis-induced psychosis. Some factors include: the age an individual starts using regularly (especially under the age of 16, and 3 or more times a week), the THC content of the cannabis being used (especially if it contains over 15 % THC), and family history or genetic predisposition for schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders.

    Reference: Schizophrenia Society of Canada. (2020, May 4). *Cannabis & Psychosis: Exploring the Link*. Retrieved July 22, 2025, from https://cannabisandpsychosis.ca/

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Substance Use and Health: True or False

13. **Since cannabis is a plant, it is ok for pregnant people to use.**
False. Using cannabis during pregnancy can negatively affect the brain development, behaviour, and mental health of your baby. These effects can be permanent and have effects through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

    Reference: Health Canada. (2018, October 15). *Thinking about using cannabis before or during pregnancy?* Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/health-effects/before-during-pregnancy.html

14. **As long as someone usually takes their birth control pill while sober, missing a few doses due to being drunk or high won't increase their risk of pregnancy.**
False. Missing 2 or more oral contraceptives per month increases a woman's chance of getting pregnant from approximately 0.3% to 9% **.**

    Reference: Liddelow, C., Mullan, B., & Boyes, M. (2020). Adherence to the oral contraceptive pill: The roles of health literacy and knowledge. *Health Psychology and Behavioural Medicine*, *8*(1), 587–600. https://doi.org/10.1080/21642850.2020.1850288

15. **If someone has used a certain drug before and it didn't cause them to get sick or overdose, it means that it will be safe for them to take this drug again.**
False. Individual responses to a certain drug depends on many factors (ex. If they ate recently, if other drugs are being used, illness, stress, tolerance, etc.). Some drugs that are purchased illegally can be tainted with other drugs or contain ingredients that the user is unaware of.

    Reference: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (n.d.). *Opioids: What you and your friends need to know* [PDF]. Retrieved July 22, 2025, from https://www.camh.ca/-/media/health-info-files/guides-and-publications/prescription-opioids-youth-en.pdf

16. **It is safe for someone to take prescription opioid medication, such as hydrocodone, that was prescribed to someone else for a different condition or injury.**
False. Opioids, and prescription medications in general, should be only used by the person they were prescribed for. Physicians and pharmacists choose and monitor specific doses that a patient can tolerate to limit the adverse effects. People who take opioids they are not used to or at higher doses than their body can handle are at risk

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of an opioid overdose. Signs and symptoms of an opioid overdose include: difficulty walking, talking or staying awake, blue, purple, or grey nails, pinpoint pupils, cold and clammy skin, slow breathing, confusion, unconsciousness, and even death. In the case of an opioid overdose, administering naloxone will help to reverse the effects.

Reference: Health Canada. (2025, February 25). *Opioid overdose*. Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids/overdose.html

17. **Drinking alcohol, such as vodka mixed with soda water, is an effective way to stay hydrated while using MDMA at a hot outdoor event.**

False. MDMA can lead to dehydration and overheating, especially if you are in a hot environment such as dancing at a club or party without taking breaks. Alcohol is a diuretic, a substance that dehydrates the body, therefore combining alcohol with MDMA can further increase the risk of dehydration. If someone is using MDMA, the best way to stay hydrated is by drinking water. However, avoid chugging excessive amounts of water as this can lead to serious health concerns such as electrolyte imbalances and swelling in the brain, which can be fatal.

Reference: NHS Inform. (n.d.). *MDMA (Ecstasy)*. Retrieved July 22, 2025, from https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/drugs-and-drug-use/common-drugs/mdma-ecstasy/

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