

Grade 7 Drug Education

Lesson 1: Substance Use and Smart Choices

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

Health Indicators

Responsible Decision-Making

1. Explore individual and social factors that influence substance use decision-making
2. Explore how to make safer choices about substance use, including the benefits of stopping or reducing use.

Self Concept

1. Explain the influence peer groups can have on individuals.

Belonging and Worth

1. Explore how personal support networks play a role in providing physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual needs.
2. Explain the importance of developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.
3. Discuss how one event can elicit multiple perspectives.

Emotions, Thoughts, and Behaviours

1. Explain how thoughts, beliefs, and values impact feelings and behaviours
2. Demonstrate skills that contribute to developing a growth mindset.

Healthy Relationships

1. Demonstrate effective ways to communicate with others

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



**Lesson 1: Substance Use
and Smart Choices**
Lesson 2: Healthy and
Unhealthy Ways of Coping



Lesson Snapshot:

Lesson 1: Substance Use and Smart Choices

Norms & Expectations

- Learning Activity 1: Understanding Substances
- Learning Activity 2: Factors that Influence Substance Use: FACE-ing the Situation
- Learning Activity 3: A Balancing Act: Harm Reduction Hustle



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 Mental Health and 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 behavior despite negative consequences to their health and life. When this behavior involves substance use, it is referred to as a substance use disorder (SUD), alcohol use disorder, or drug use disorder.
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	Experiences, including abuse, neglect, bullying or witnessing violence, that occur before the age of 18. Experiencing ACEs is associated with an increased risk of substance use problems.
Controlled substance	For more information, see Controlled Substances . A substance whose production, possession, and use is regulated by the government due to high potential for abuse. Controlled substances include prescription medications (e.g., opioids, benzodiazepines) and illegal drugs (e.g., cocaine, heroin, marijuana).
Craving	In the context of substance use, a strong desire to use a substance. Craving can be caused by both internal (e.g., mood, anxiety) and external (e.g., a drink, person or event) factors.
Dependence	The need of using a substance (physical or mental) to feel the effects of a substance. Dependence occurs when a person's body has adapted to the presence of a substance and needs it to function normally.
Detoxification	Detoxification refers to the process of removing a substance from the body. It is often done to prepare a person for treatment. Detoxification can be done in a hospital or at home. It is important to note that detoxification is not a cure for substance use disorder. It is a first step to help a person feel better and to prepare them for treatment.



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.

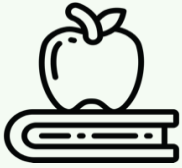
**Support Students Emotional Wellbeing**

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](#).

Lesson 1: Substance Use and Smart Choices



Learning Activities and Teacher Background Resources

Learning Activity 1: Understanding Substances

Learning Activity 2: Factors that Influence Substance Use: FACE-ing the Situation

Learning Activity 3: A Balancing Act: Harm Reduction Hustle

Teacher Resources:

- Substance Snapshots: [Methylphenidate](#), [Cannabis](#), [Inhaled Cannabis](#), [Edible Cannabis](#), [Synthetic Cannabis](#), [Inhaled Nicotine](#), [Alcohol](#), [Depressants](#), [Stimulants](#)
- Infographics: [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#), [Trauma-Informed Practices \(TIPs\)](#), [Neurodiversity](#), [Drug Categories](#), [Factors Affecting Decision-Making](#), [Overconsumption](#)
- [FACE Decision Making Model](#) (Student version, teacher version)

Norms & 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: Understanding Substances

Learning Activity Objectives:



- Identify the difference between legal, and illegal drugs
- Examine information about various substances, such as cannabis, nicotine, alcohol, and methylphenidate
- Examine the potential harms of various substances, such as cannabis, nicotine, alcohol, and methylphenidate
- Use critical thinking skills to make decisions and to problem solve
- Collaborate respectfully with peers

Materials:

- Discussion prompts
- [True or False? Teacher Presentation](#)
- [Passport to Learning About Substance Use](#)
- Substance Snapshots: [Methylphenidate](#), [Cannabis](#), [Inhaled Cannabis](#), [Edible Cannabis](#), [Synthetic Cannabis](#), [Inhaled Nicotine](#), [Alcohol](#), [Depressants](#), [Stimulants](#)
- Infographics:
 - [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#)
 - [Trauma-Informed Practices \(TIPs\)](#)
 - [Neurodiversity](#)
 - [Overconsumption](#)
 - [Caregiver Substance Use](#)
 - [Drug Categories](#)
 - [Factors Affecting Decision-Making](#)

Introduction

In Learning Activity 1, students will begin their learning journey exploring substances such as **methylphenidate, cannabis, nicotine, and alcohol**. While these 4 drugs are the focus throughout all learning activities, teachers may select other substances relevant to their students or school situation and adapt the activities accordingly. The [DECYDE website](#) provides information on many other substances.



SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Teachers may refer to the [methylphenidate](#), [cannabis](#), [nicotine](#), and [alcohol](#) Substance Snapshots to help inform the discussion.

Begin the learning activity with a discussion to determine students' understanding of what a drug is (e.g., the difference between prescription, non-prescription, legal, and illegal

substances). The discussion prompts may guide conversation. [**Note:** Teachers can refer to and discuss the [Drug Categories infographic](#) with students before beginning the discussion prompts].



Discussion Prompts

- What is a drug? Why do we take drugs?
- What is a medication? Is a medication a drug?
- What medications may prevent diseases and illness?
- What is a prescription drug?
- What does it mean for a drug to be non-prescription? What are some examples?
- What is an over-the-counter drug or non-prescription drug?
- Why is it important to have an adult help administer medications to children?
- What does it mean if a drug is legal? Illegal? What are some examples?
- Is cannabis an illegal drug? Discuss.
- What drug is found in cigarettes or vapes?
- What are some examples of drugs?
- What medications could help our body when we are not feeling well?
- What does it mean for a drug to be prescription only? What are some examples of prescription medications?
- Can prescription and non-prescription medications be misused? How?
- Do you think alcohol is a drug? Nicotine? Cannabis?
- Is alcohol considered an illegal drug? Why or why not?
- Who are the trusted sources to help us find information about medications?
- How may drugs such as alcohol or nicotine be harmful?
- What can we do to reduce the harm?
- Why do you think someone may decide to start using substances?

Exploration Activity

Following their opening discussions on drugs, invite students to participate in the **True or False** activity. This brief activity will provide an introduction to the learning carousel on **methylphenidate, cannabis, nicotine, and alcohol**.

This activity will enable the teacher to get an understanding of student's prior knowledge of these particular substances. Students will indicate whether they agree or disagree with the following statements. The teacher may display the statements using the [True/False CANVA Teacher Presentation](#).



SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Teachers may refer to the [methylphenidate](#), [cannabis](#), [nicotine](#), and [alcohol](#) Substance Snapshots to help inform the discussion.

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Discuss each statement as they are presented.

- If they think the statement is true, they raise their both hands.
- If they think the statement is false, they raise their left hand.
- If they are not sure, they raise their right hand.

Alternatively, you may get students to answer questions in a different way, such as:

- Students start in the middle of the classroom.
- When they hear the statement, they move to the right side if they think it is true.
- They move to the left side if they think it is false.
- They stay in the middle if they are unsure.

Teacher Discussion Guide: Activity: I Agree or I Disagree

1. Vaping is addictive.
 - **True.** Vaping has nicotine, which can be very addictive.
2. Drinking alcohol is a good way to reduce stress and anxiety
 - **False.** Although many people drink alcohol to reduce stress or anxiety, alcohol is a depressant and can actually make you feel worse
3. Alcohol can cause brain damage in teenagers
 - **True.** Your brain does not stop developing until age 25, so substances can cause brain damage before then, even though it is legal to drink alcohol at age 19.
4. You can develop health problems from being around someone who is vaping
 - **True.** Others can breathe in the mist or vape which can cause health problems in someone else, much like second hand smoke from someone who is smoking cigarettes
5. Tobacco kills more people than any other drug
 - **True.** Cigarette smoking has many long-term health risks, such as cancer, lung disease, or heart disease.
6. Methylphenidate (e.g., Concerta, Ritalin) is a medication commonly prescribed for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
 - **True.** Methylphenidate helps improve focus and attention and reduce impulsivity.
7. Methylphenidate (e.g., Concerta, Ritalin) is a depressant
 - **False.** Methylphenidate is a stimulant.

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8. Cigarettes usually have more nicotine than vapes
 - **False.** The e-juice in vapes often has much more nicotine than in cigarettes, and can be very addictive.
9. Caffeine is a drug
 - **True.** Caffeine, although it is in things like coffee, tea, energy drinks, is still a drug. People drink caffeine to stay awake and give them more energy, so it acts like a drug.
10. Alcohol is a stimulant
 - **False.** Alcohol is a depressant and can make you feel sleepy.
11. It is legal for teenagers to buy vapes
 - **False.** It is illegal to sell any type of nicotine (vapes, cigarettes) to anyone under 18 years old.
12. It is legal for adults to smoke cannabis and drive an ATV
 - **False.** It is illegal for anyone to use cannabis before driving any motorized vehicle, including cars, ATVs, snowmobiles
13. Cannabis can increase your appetite
 - **True.** Cannabis often increases your appetite so you want to eat more
14. All types of alcoholic drinks have the same amount of alcohol
 - **False.** Alcoholic drinks can come in different percentage and different size containers. Those with higher concentration have more alcohol.
15. It takes longer for cannabis edibles to cause a high than smoking cannabis
 - It takes 30-60 min for edibles to work and lasts longer, whereas smoking starts to work in about 10 minutes and doesn't last as long.
16. It is ok to let my friend take some of my methylphenidate (e.g., Concerta, Ritalin) because she has the same symptoms as me.
 - **False.** It is illegal to share or sell your prescription medication to other people. Although it may be safe for you, it could cause dangerous effects in other people, such as high blood pressure, heart arrhythmias. People should be assessed by their own healthcare professional before taking a stimulant.
17. It is legal to purchase cannabis from your friend
 - **False.** Legal cannabis can be purchased from a cannabis dispensary. Purchasing it from anyone is not legal and could be laced with other drugs.
18. Cocaine can only be snorted

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- **False.** Cocaine can be snorted, smoked, injected, or ingested orally, though each method has different risks.

19. Meth is short for methylphenidate

- **False.** "Meth" usually refers to methamphetamine, not methylphenidate. They are different drugs, though both are stimulants.

20. Cannabis is considered unique because it can be considered a stimulant, depressant, or hallucinogen.

- **True.** Cannabis can act as a stimulant, depressant, or hallucinogen depending on the strain, dose, and individual.

Carousel Activity: Passport to Learning About Substance Use

Students will engage in the carousel activity to learn about different substances in more detail (methylphenidate, cannabis, nicotine, and alcohol). Explain to students that they will work in small groups where they will visit 4 stations to find information on different drugs. Ensure to prepare copies of the applicable snapshots and infographics for each station. Students may also visit the [DECYDE website](#) to access these Substance Snapshots.

**SUBSTANCE
SNAPSHOT**

Teachers may refer to the [methylphenidate](#), [cannabis](#), [nicotine](#), and [alcohol](#) Substance Snapshots to help inform the discussion.

Introduce the **Passport to Learning About Substance Use** to students. Walk through this passport with the students, explaining that they will be recording their learnings and reflections here throughout the learning activities. Students may complete the passport electronically or using a print copy of the passport booklet. Students may also choose to have a discussion at each station and present their findings orally. The objective is that students will visit each station to explore information on each substance including their effects, risks, and how individuals may reduce the harm when using these drugs.



Tips: Students can refer to the "Overdose Signs and Symptoms" section of infographic for "harms of taking too much drug" questions. Refer to "How to Stay Safer" section of infographic for "reducing the harm when using/taking drug" questions. Teachers may opt to have students work individually and duplicate stations as necessary:

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Station 1: Cannabis ○ Substance Snapshots: Cannabis; Cannabis (Inhaled), Edible Cannabis, Synthetic Cannabis ○ Overconsumption	Station 3: Nicotine ○ Substance Snapshots: Stimulants, Nicotine ○ Overconsumption
Station 2: Alcohol ○ Substance Snapshots: Depressants, Alcohol ○ Overconsumption	Station 4: Methylphenidate ○ Substance Snapshots: Stimulants, Methylphenidate ○ Overconsumption

Students will read the substance snapshots and different infographics at each station, discuss with their peers, and record their learnings in their **Passport to Learning about Substance Use** (available as a [PDF](#) or on [Google Slides](#)).



Sharing and Reflection

Students will reflect on their learnings about the different substances and share a strategy that they feel is important for youth to know about reducing harm from using the substances, they explored. The following reflection questions are included in the **Passport to Learning About Substance Use**:

- Share a strategy that you learned which is important for youth to understand in order to reduce harm from using alcohol, cannabis, nicotine, or stimulants if they choose to try a substance or find themselves in a compromising situation.
- Your friend is going to a party where there will be a lot of alcohol and cannabis. You don't think your friend should go, but they are not listening to you. You're worried they might drink or use cannabis at the party, and you want them to be safe.
- **What advice would you give your friend?**
Remember to inform your friend of harm reduction strategies in case they choose to go to the party and they encounter alcohol or cannabis.

Sharing and Reflection	Sharing and Reflection
Share a strategy that you learned which is important for youth to understand in order to reduce harm using alcohol, cannabis, nicotine, or methylphenidate.	Your friend is going to a party where there will be a lot of alcohol and cannabis. You don't think your friend should go but they will not listen to you. You are worried that they may drink or use cannabis at the party. You want your friend to be safe. What advice would you give to your friend?

Teachers may choose to model their own example to help with the sharing and reflection activity.

Learning Activity 2: Factors that Influence Substance Use: FACE-ing the Situation



Learning Objectives

- Explain how personal (e.g., feelings, beliefs, experiences) and social factors (e.g., family, friends, school, media) influence substance-use decisions.
- Examine the potential harms of unsafe use of substances such as cannabis, nicotine, alcohol, and methylphenidate
- Apply the FACE Decision-Making model when facing situations and making decisions
- Use critical thinking skills to make decisions and to problem solve
- Collaborate respectfully with peers

Resources

- Discussion Prompts
- [Passport to Learning About Substance Use](#)
 - Student Activity: What Influences Me
- [Teacher Discussion Guide: Factors that Influence Substance Use: FACE-ing the Situation](#)
- Substance Snapshots: [Methylphenidate](#), [Cannabis](#), [Inhaled Cannabis](#), [Edible Cannabis](#), [Synthetic Cannabis](#), [Inhaled Nicotine](#), [Alcohol](#), [Depressants](#), [Stimulants](#)
- Infographics:
 - [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#)
 - [Trauma-Informed Practices \(TIPs\)](#)
 - [Neurodiversity](#)
 - [Caregiver Substance Use](#)
 - [Drug Categories](#)
 - [Factors Affecting Decision-Making](#)
- [FACE Decision Making Model](#) (Student version, teacher version)

Introduction

In Learning Activity 2, students will assess different scenarios where youth are faced with making decisions around substance use. Both personal and social factors influence how we think, act, and make decisions. **Personal factors** are internal and include our perceptions, feelings, emotions, beliefs, knowledge, opinions, values, and personal experiences. **Social factors** are external and include influences in our environment, such as family, peer groups, school, role models, and media.

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These factors influence our decisions which lead to healthy or unhealthy behaviors. Refer to the infographic on [Factors Affecting Decision-Making](#) for an explanation of these factors. Students will examine the factors that may influence decisions to engage or not engage in substance use. They will consider these factors in making safe and informed decisions through the following 5 scenarios:

- **Scenario 1: Jordan and Vaping**
- **Scenario 2: Alex and Cannabis Gummies**
- **Scenario 3: Taylor and Drinking Alcohol**
- **Scenario 4: Robin and Methylphenidate**
- **Scenario 5: Kai and Avery Smoking**



SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Teachers may refer to the [methylphenidate](#), [cannabis](#), [nicotine](#), and [alcohol](#) Substance Snapshots to help inform the discussion.

To begin this lesson:

- Engage students in a discussion on what or who may influence us when making decisions. The teacher may use the [Factors Affecting Decision-Making](#) model to guide this discussion.
- Direct students to the activity, **What Influences Me** (in their [Passport to Learning About Substance Use](#)) where they will brainstorm the influences that shape their own personal values and their decisions. The teacher may use this activity and the discussion prompts below to encourage students to think about who and what influences their decisions



Discussion prompts:

- What are personal values? Social values?
- What factors shape our personal and social values?
- What or who influences your decisions?
- What factor do you think has the greatest influence on the decisions you make?
- When you are making a decision, who do you feel has the greatest influence on you?
- Who or what has the least influence?
- Do you think these influences will change in the future? How?

Following this discussion, present and review the [FACE Decision-Making Model](#) with students. Inform students that they will be working through scenarios with youth who are faced with decisions. All scenarios are in the [Passport to Learning About Substance Use](#).

Then, using **Scenario 1: Jordan and Vaping**, model how to apply the FACE Decision-Making Model that youth may also apply when facing situations and making decisions.



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- The [Teacher Discussion Guide: Factors that Influence Substance Use: FACE-ing the Situation](#). Scenario 1: Jordan and Vaping provides guidance for this discussion.
- The [Factors Influencing Decision-Making](#) infographic will aid discussion on what or who may influence decisions.
- Review the Infographics: [ACEs](#), [TIPs](#), and [Neurodiversity](#) for your own learning. These are not intended for students.
- During the conversation about Jordan and Vaping, highlight the influential factors which contribute to decision-making as well as decisions to engage in or NOT to engage in substance use. Highlight how influences can be positive, negative, or both.
- When discussing the scenarios, be mindful of language or assumptions that may reinforce stigma toward people who use substances. Refer to the [Stigma infographic](#) for guidance on using respectful, non-judgmental language.

Teacher to model with students: Scenario 1 – Jordan and Vaping

Scenario: Lately, Jordan's home has been filled with the tense atmosphere of his parents' frequent arguments, adding stress to his daily life and disrupting his ability to get a good night's sleep. To cope with this, Jordan finds comfort in watching his favorite streamer on social media who uses nicotine vaping for relaxation. Faced with his own stressors, Jordan wonders whether trying nicotine vapes could offer him similar relief. What decision should Jordan make?

Feel:

How might Jordan feel in this situation?

- He might feel tired
- He might feel stressed.
- He might want to feel better
- He might feel unsure
- He might feel envious of his favorite Twitch streamer

Why would Jordan feel this way?

- He could feel tired because he's not sleeping very well
- He could feel stressed because of being in a potentially hostile environment
- He could feel unsure because he does not know the effects of vaping
- He could feel envious because of how cool the Twitch streamer is

Who else might have feelings about this situation?

- His parent/guardian
- A trusted adult (extended family member, coach, babysitter)
- His friends

Assess:

What are Jordan's choices?



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Teachers may refer to the [nicotine](#) Substance Snapshot to help inform the discussion.

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- He could try vaping
- He could wait to talk to a trusted adult about how he is feeling

What factors or influences might influence his decision?

- Knowing that his parent/guardian may be disappointed if he decides to try vaping
- Knowing that vaping has many unknown long-term effects and can affect him negatively in the short term
- Knowing that he may develop a dependence to vaping
- Knowing his friends' opinions on vaping

Who can help Jordan make this choice?

- A guidance counselor
- A trusted family member
- A trusted teacher
- A friend

Choose:

What is the safest choice Jordan can make?

- He could wait to talk to a trusted adult
- He could choose healthier ways to manage this stress (e.g. exercising, meditation, talking to somebody about it)
- If he decides to vape, he could choose lower nicotine concentrations

Evaluate:

How would this choice impact Jordan and others?

- The choice may put harmful chemicals into Jordan's body if he chooses to vape
- The choice may increase the risk of becoming addicted to nicotine
- The choice may cause his friends to think of him differently if he vapes
- The choice may disappoint his parents/caregivers, or another adult

Who could Jordan talk to about the choice he made?

- He could talk to a guidance counsellor or trusted teacher
- He could talk to a trusted friend
- He could talk to a Caregiver
- He could talk to an extended family member (e.g. cousin, aunt/uncle)

What factors or influences might change Jordan's decision?

- Knowing that his parent/guardian may be disappointed if he decides to try vaping
- Knowing that vaping has many unknown long-term effects and can affect him negatively in the short term
- Knowing that he may develop a dependence to vaping

- Knowing his friends' opinions on vaping

Exploration: How would you FACE the situation?

Invite students to work in small groups to discuss an assigned scenario. Students will apply the FACE Decision-Making Model as they work through their scenarios. Using their **Passport to Learning About Substance Use**, they will examine the possible choices, determine the influential factors, and highlight the potential consequences. The scenarios for this learning activity are:

- **Scenario 1: Jordan and Vaping**
- **Scenario 2: Alex and Cannabis Gummies**
- **Scenario 3: Taylor and Drinking**
- **Scenario 4: Robin and Methylphenidate**
- **Scenario 5: Kai and Smoking**

The teacher may opt to have students work through more than one scenario. The [Passport to Learning About Substance Use](#) provides access for students to use the [FACE Decision-Making Model](#) with guiding questions, the **Factors Affecting Decision-Making** infographic and the student versions of the scenarios.

The [Teacher Discussion Guide: Factors that Influence Substance Use: FACE-ing the Situation](#) for all scenarios provides guidance for the teacher during these learning conversations. The [Overconsumption](#), [ACEs](#), [TIPs](#) and [Neurodiversity](#) infographics provide further background information for teacher necessary during these discussion.

Sharing and Reflection

Invite each group to share their decision-making journey to the class and highlight what they learned about responsible decision-making. Alternatively, students may discuss and reflect within their own groups. Encourage discussion around the choices made, the influential factors, and highlight the potential consequences. Teachers may choose to model their own example to help with the sharing and reflection activity.



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Students may then create a personal response as they reflect on personal decisions they made and the influential factors that may have contributed to this decision using the Sharing and Reflection pages included in their [Passport to Learning About Substance Use](#). This is a personal reflection that students may not wish to share. Students will use their **What Influences Me** brainstorming activity from the lesson opening.

	Sharing and Reflection		Sharing and Reflection
Reflect on the influential factors that may affect the decisions you make. You may refer to the <i>What Influences Me</i> brainstorming you completes earlier in your passport.	Think of a decision you made and indicate the factors which may have played a role in that decision. Remember that these factors may influence us to make both safe and unsafe decisions.	Which factors do you think may have the most influence when choosing either USE or NOT USE nicotine, cannabis, alcohol, methylphenidate, or other substances.	
Source: Adapted from Ontario Curriculum for Grades 7-9, 2005	Adapted from	Grade 7 Learning Activity 2: Factors that Influence Substance Use (FACNO the Situation)	

Learning Activity 3: A Balancing Act: Harm Reduction Hustle



Learning Objectives

- Examine the potential harms of unsafe use of substances such as cannabis, nicotine, alcohol, and methylphenidate
- Identify the signs and risks of overconsumption of a substance such as cannabis, nicotine, alcohol, and methylphenidate
- Identify harm-reduction strategies to reduce risks associated with substance use.
- Use critical thinking skills to make decisions and to problem solve
- Collaborate respectfully with peers

Materials

- Discussion prompts
- [Overconsumption of Substances: Fact or Fiction \(Canva presentation\)](#)
- Substance Snapshots: [Methylphenidate](#), [Cannabis](#), [Inhaled Cannabis](#), [Edible Cannabis](#), [Synthetic Cannabis](#), [Inhaled Nicotine](#), [Alcohol](#), [Depressants](#), [Stimulants](#)
- Infographics:
 - [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#)
 - [Trauma-Informed Practices \(TIPs\)](#)
 - [Neurodiversity](#)
 - [Overconsumption](#)
 - [Caregiver Substance Use](#)
 - [Drug Categories](#)
 - [Factors Affecting Decision-Making](#)
- [Passport to Learning About Substance Use](#)
- [Teacher Discussion Guide: A Balancing Act: Harm Reduction Hustle](#)
 - Situation 1: Alex and Finley at the Movies (Cannabis Gummies)
 - Situation 2: Jordan and His Little Sister (Nicotine)
 - Situation 3: Robin and the Big Math Test (Methylphenidate)
 - Situation 4: Taylor at a Sleepover (Alcohol)

Introduction

The objective of Learning Activity 3 is to examine the risks of taking too much of a substance and to determine strategies to reduce the chance of overconsumption. Taking too much of a substance is commonly called an overdose or poisoning. The symptoms of a poisoning may depend on what kind of substance is taken.

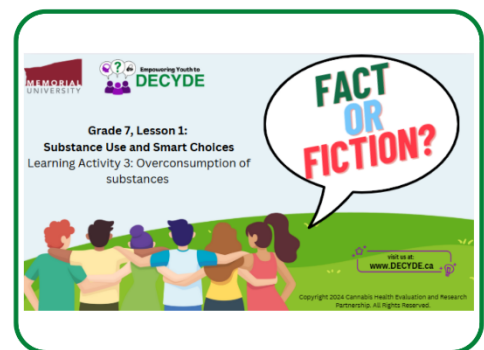
During this learning activity, students will be working in groups to examine situations where youth have overconsumed a substance such as **cannabis, nicotine, alcohol, and methylphenidate**. They will:

- **Identify the effects of the substance;**
- **Identify the factors that may have influenced the youth to use the substance;**
- **Determine how and when to seek help;**
- **Identify strategies to reduce the harm of substance use.**

Activity: Overconsumption of Substances – FACT or FICTION?

As an opening activity to assess students' initial understanding of overconsumption, engage them in the activity **FACT or FICTION**. This activity will enable the teacher to get an understanding of student's prior knowledge of overconsumption of the following substances: **methylphenidate, cannabis, nicotine, and alcohol**.

- Create table groups of students.
- Use the [**FACT or FICTION Teacher Presentation**](#) to display a series of statements for students.
- With their table groups, students have 30 seconds to discuss each statement and come to a consensus of whether the statement is FACT or FICTION.
- Upon the teacher's direction, groups will either stand (if statement is FACT or stay seated if statement is FICTION).



Teacher Discussion Guide: Overconsumption of Substances – FACT or FICTION?

Discuss each statement as they are presented using the Canva or Google Slides presentation:

1. Taking too much methylphenidate can make you very sleepy.
 - **Fiction.** Methylphenidate is a stimulant that can keep you awake.
2. In Canada, 4 people die from a drunk driving accident every day.
 - **Fact.** Four people die from a drunk driving accident every day, with thousands more injured from alcohol or drug-related accidents.

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3. Drinking coffee or taking a cold shower can help sober up someone who has drunk too much alcohol.
 - **Fiction.** It is not safe to let someone sleep off alcohol overdose without seeking medical help. Alcohol poisoning can be life-threatening, and immediate medical attention is necessary.
4. Taking methylphenidate with alcohol can increase the risk of heart problems.
 - **Fact.** There is an increased risk of heart problems when mixing methylphenidate and alcohol, including elevated heart rate, and heart attack.
5. A person can die if they drink too much alcohol in a short period of time.
 - **Fact:** Alcohol intoxication can be deadly. For example, a person could vomit and choke after drinking too much alcohol.
6. Consuming too much cannabis can result in acute psychosis.
 - **Fact.** Frequent use of cannabis can result in temporary symptoms of psychosis, such as hallucinations and delusions.
7. You can overdose on nicotine by vaping.
 - **Fact.** Overdosing on nicotine through vaping can cause symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and dizziness.
8. Taking too much cannabis can cause severe nausea, vomiting, dizziness, anxiety, or paranoia called “greening out”.
 - **Fact.** Greening out happens when a person consumes too much cannabis. They can experience physical and psychological symptoms such as dizziness, nausea and vomiting, paleness, loss of mobility, anxiety or paranoia, disorientation, panic attacks, memory loss, and hallucinations.
9. Methylphenidate overdose is more common among youth who use the medication without a prescription than among those who take it as prescribed for ADHD.
 - **Fact.** The risks of taking too high a dose of a prescription stimulant include high blood pressure, seizures, psychotic episodes, or overdose.
10. It is safe to let someone sleep off the effects of alcohol after drinking too much.
 - **Fiction.** It is not safe to let someone sleep off alcohol overdose without seeking medical help. Alcohol poisoning can be life-threatening, and immediate medical attention is necessary.



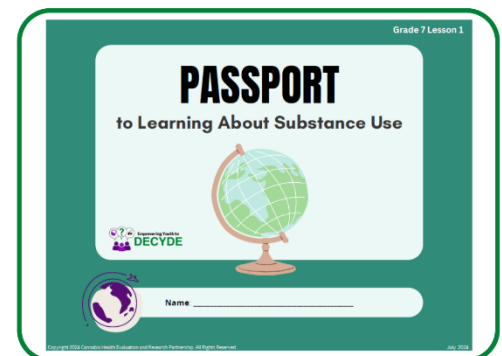
Discussion Prompts

- What does overconsumption mean?
- What are examples overconsumption?
- Have you spent excessive time on computer? Watching TV? Movies?
- Have you spent excessive time on social media?
- Have you spent excessive time doing school work? Reading? Or doing nothing?
- Do you ever feel like you ate too much? Walked too much? Ran too much? Exercised too much?
- How did this make you feel?
- Do you think this is a healthy or safe behaviour?
- What may happen if we overconsume substances such as alcohol? Cannabis?
- What are some harms we noted in the FACT/FICTION activity?

Exploration Activity

Invite students to work in small groups to discuss situations included in their [Passport to Learning About Substance Use](#) where youth have taken too much of a substance:

- **Scenario 1:** Alex and Finley at the Movies (Cannabis Gummies)
- **Scenario 2:** Jordan and His Little Sister (Nicotine)
- **Scenario 3:** Robin and the Big Math Test (Methylphenidate)
- **Scenario 4:** Taylor at a Sleepover (Alcohol)



The teacher may assign one situation to each group duplicating where necessary. Upon completion, each group will share their learnings to the class and initiate a whole class discussion. Each group will also create a possible conversation to roleplay where the youth will demonstrate a smart decision based on their assigned situations. Students will work through each situation to examine the following “**Look For’s**”:

- **Effects:** What signs of an overdose or poisoning is this person displaying? What are the risks associated with taking too much of this substance?

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- **Influences:** What are some influences in this scenario that may have led to the person taking too much (e.g., desire to fit in, seeing a video on social media about the substance, sibling, peers, self-confidence)
- **Seeking Help:** How might you help this person if you were in this scenario? (e.g., who would you contact? Would you try to manage it yourself?). What factors may influence your decision?
- **Harm Reduction:** What strategies can be used to prevent taking too much of this substance next time?

Using **Situation 1: Alex and Finley at the Movies**, the teacher will **walk through and model the expectations of this activity**, emphasizing the “Look For’s” that youth should be aware of in such situations. [Note: The [Teacher Discussion Guide](#) provides guidance for discussion for each scenario in this activity].

Students will record their learnings in their [Passport to Learning About Substance Use](#).

- Reminder: For their assigned situation, each group will imagine and roleplay a conversation where the youth will demonstrate a smart decision.

Allow students time to **HUSTLE** and visit students in other groups who are working on different situations. They can discuss and share information about their assigned situations and record what they learn in their passports. The teacher may opt to have students work through all situations.

Scenario 1: Alex and Finley at the Movies (Cannabis Gummies)

[Teacher Discussion Guide: A Balancing Act: Harm Reduction Hustle](#)

Situation 1: Alex and Finley at the Movies: Cannabis

Students will work in small groups to discuss situations where youth have taken too much of a substance. Upon completion, each group will share their learnings to the class and initiate a whole class discussion. Each group will also create a possible conversation to roleplay where the youth will demonstrate a smart decision based on their assigned situations. Students will work through each situation to examine the following “LOOK FORs”: **Effects, Influences, Seeking Help and Harm Reduction Strategies**. Students will record their learnings in their Passport to Learning About Substance Use. Students will require

- **Substance Snapshots** for Methylphenidate, Cannabis, Nicotine, Alcohol, Depressants, Methylphenidate, and Stimulants
- **Infographics:** Overconsumption, Factors Affecting Decision Making, Responding to Substance-Related Emergencies

Alex is a Grade 7 student who just moved to a new junior high school. He attended a movie with a new friend, Finley. At the movie, Finley offered Alex a cannabis gummy that he had taken his older brother's room. Alex had never tried cannabis before but did not want to disappoint her new friend or ruin the fun. Alex decided to eat the gummy, but, as time passed, the effects of the edible became more intense than expected. Alex began to feel dizzy, anxious, and had a fast heartbeat. Finley noticed that Alex was not feeling well, but did not know what to do. Should they seek help at the theatre, contact a trusted adult, or try to manage the situation themselves?

Situation 1: Alex and Finley at the Movies (Cannabis)

Effects

- ☐ What signs of an overdose or poisoning is Alex displaying?
 - Dizziness
 - Anxious
 - Fast heartbeat
 - Intense feelings
- ☐ What are the risks associated with taking too much of this substance?
 - Severe nausea and vomiting
 - Intense anxiety, panic and paranoia
 - Dizziness

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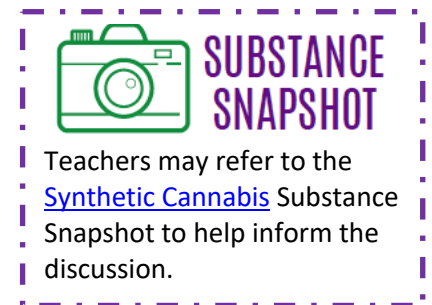
- Greening out
- Shortness of breath, rapid heartbeat, chest pain

Influences

- ☐ What are some factors that may have influenced Alex to take this substance?
 - Peers
 - Fitting in
 - To feel cool
 - Curiosity

Seeking Help

- ☐ How might you help Alex if you were in this scenario? Who would you contact? Would you try to manage it yourself?
 - Inform Alex of the harms
 - Seek help at the theatre and call 911
 - Call their family
- ☐ What factors may influence your decision?
 - Experiences
 - Knowledge about cannabis gummies
 - Family
 - Feelings: Fear of getting in trouble
 - Feelings: Desire to do the right thing despite the consequences

**Harm Reduction**

- ☐ What strategies can be used to prevent taking too much of this substance next time?
 - Do not use cannabis.
 - Do not take it before school or work; Or before operating any type of vehicle, machinery or tools.
 - Do not use synthetic cannabis which is extremely dangerous and illegal
 - Start small and go slow: Don't take too much.
 - Be aware the inhaling cannabis can harm the lungs and heart.
 - Do not mix with other drugs or medications.
 - Adults can choose legal cannabis. They can but from regulated sites. It is illegal for youth to purchase.

Conversation: Making Smart and Safe Decisions

- ☐ Imagine and create a conversation between Alex and Finley that demonstrates a smart decision. You may introduce other people to this situation. Your teacher may ask you to roleplay this conversation for the class.



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Sharing and Reflection

Invite student to select one of the reflections activities to complete in their [Passport to Learning About Substance Use](#). Teachers may choose to model their own example to help with the sharing and reflection activity.

	Sharing and Reflection		Sharing and Reflection
	On your journey you have read and met several youth who were faced with making a decision about drug use. The drugs you explored were alcohol, nicotine, cannabis and methylphenidate. Sometimes, drugs are used to prevent an illness, alleviate symptoms, or cure. These medicinal drugs help a person feel better. With a partner, imagine and create a scenario where someone is making a decision to use a drug in this way. Consider the harms of this drug if not used responsibly.		Imagine you are a pharmacist. Go to the DECYDE website and select a substance you would like to know more about. What are the effects of this substance and the harms it may cause? What are some strategies to prevent harm?

Reflection Questions: (as pictured above)

- ☐ Throughout your journey, you have read several scenarios about young people who were faced with making decisions about substance use (nicotine, cannabis, alcohol, and methylphenidate, an ADHD medication). With a partner, create a scenario in which someone is deciding whether to use a drug, such as vaping nicotine or cannabis, consuming alcohol, or drinking coffee, or energy drinks. Consider the potential harms of that substance and ways to minimize risk. Tip: Go to the DECYDE website and view the Substance Snapshots for ideas!

OR

- ☐ Imagine you are a pharmacist visiting a classroom to educate students about a substance. Visit the DECYDE website and choose one substance that you think the class should learn more about. What are the effects of this substance and the harms it may cause? What are some strategies to prevent harm when this substance is used?

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