

THE TRUTH ABOUT
ALCOHOL
AND DRUG USE

FOR 16 - 18 YEAR OLDS



NOT FOR SALE

This booklet is intended for High School students. We are sharing the facts with you so that you can make smart choices and be your best self. We hope you will share this information with your friends, parents, teachers and others. Talk to your parent or other trusted adult about any question you have.

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ALCOHOL

Alcohol is a drug contained in beverages/drinks such as wine, beer, and spirits. These include traditional drinks like chang'aa, busaa, mnazi, muratina, karubu, etc. After you drink alcohol, it is absorbed through the walls of the stomach and intestines, directly into the blood stream. It then travels through the blood to the brain. Once it reaches the brain, it depresses or slows down the brain's activity.

WHAT DOES ALCOHOL DO?

A SMALL AMOUNT:

- Slows down the ability to think clearly and can cause people to make poor decisions;
- Can cause people to feel more daring than usual and take unhealthy risks.

A LARGE AMOUNT:

- Slows down other areas of the brain and nervous system;
- Causes dizziness;
- Decreases coordination;
- Decreases reaction time;
- Makes it harder to speak, walk, and stay awake;
- Causes some people to pass out or temporarily lose their memory;
- Causes loss of inhibitions (sense of restraint) and clouds judgment.

Myths

Drinking coffee or an energy drink / taking a cold shower / exercising helps you to sober up.

1

Only time can sober you up. Coffee/energy drinks contain caffeine which makes you more alert but will not sober you up. All they do is cover up the effects of alcohol. Showering and exercising also give the impression of being more alert and awake. Being alert does not mean that you are sober.

Alcohol makes you more attractive!

2

Alcohol can make you more likely to do something you had not planned on, like having unwanted or unprotected sex, which in turn can result in an unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease including HIV. That is not attractive at all.

Drinking alcohol makes you look grown-up.

3

Use of alcohol interferes with development of the brain. Being grown up involves developing physically, mentally and emotionally.

Drinking alcohol is a rite of passage and therefore socially acceptable.

4

Brain development reaches maturity at age 25. Taking alcohol before this age interferes with brain development and puts you at risk of addiction.

Myths

No fun without alcohol and drugs.

6

There are many healthy ways of having fun e.g sports, music, drama, dance, etc that one can engage in. Taking alcohol and drugs can expose you to risky behaviours including sexual behaviour, injecting drug use and violence.

My friends will not want to hang out with me if I do not drink.

7

There are many ways to hang out or have fun without drinking alcohol like sports, singing and dancing. It is great to have friends who believe in the same things that you do.

Alcohol is not a drug.

8

Alcohol is a drug which slows down the central nervous system. It belongs to a class of drugs called depressants.

Alcohol gives you energy. You will be able to party all night long.

9

Alcohol is a depressant that hinders your ability to think, speak or move. It gradually affects perception, coordination and judgement well before there are signs of impairment.

Taking a small amount of alcohol is okay.

10

Even a small amount of alcohol will slow down your ability to think clearly and may cause you to make poor decisions.

Myths

There is good and bad alcohol. Beer and wine is less harmful than spirits.

Alcohol can be used to treat ailments.

Alcohol makes one courageous.

Traditional alcohol preserves culture and is not harmful.

It is rare for a young person to become an alcoholic.

Alcohol is a sexual stimulant.

Legal drugs like alcohol are much safer to use and less harmful than illegal (hard drugs).

Facts

11

All types of alcoholic drinks are harmful to your health.

12

Alcohol is not a medicine.

13

The feeling of courage is temporary and wears off as alcohol is processed in the body. The underlying problem of being shy will remain. You can gain courage by developing social skills.

14

All alcohol is harmful whether traditional or manufactured.

15

Brain development reaches maturity at age 25. Taking alcohol at a younger age compromises the process and puts you at risk of addiction.

16

While alcohol may seem to arouse one sexually, one of the immediate effects of alcohol is reduced inhibition which may lead to an increase in sexual behaviour. This is linked to risks such as HIV/AIDS, date rape, unwanted pregnancies, mental health problems, etc.

17

All types of alcoholic drinks are harmful to the body.

CANNABIS:

Cannabis (also known as bhang) is a dried mixture of leaves, vines, seeds and stems of a plant called *cannabis sativa*.

WHAT DOES CANNABIS DO?

It affects the person consuming it within minutes. It produces a 'high' and affects the body in several ways:

- **Makes it harder to pay attention;**
- **Causes the heart to beat faster and work harder;**
- **Raises someone's blood pressure;**
- **Makes one's hand shaky;**
- **Causes one to feel sleepy;**
- **Makes it harder to learn new things;**
- **Makes it harder to remember things;**
- **Makes some people feel nervous and confused;**
- **Makes some people feel depressed.**



MYTHS

1. Cannabis makes you smart in Math and Science.
2. Cannabis is a morale booster/ strengthens your ability to perform manual chores and responsibilities.
3. It is medicinal.
4. Cannabis is not as harmful as cigarettes, it is natural and comes from a plant.
5. Cannabis increases spirituality.

FACTS

Cannabis does not make you smarter. Children who smoke cannabis tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of school than those who do not use. Cannabis like other drugs will affect your attention, memory, and learning. The best way to be smart in Math and Science is study the subjects.

Smoking cannabis makes a person feel like they have excess energy to do many things but in the process you are unable to focus on any task. In the end no task is done to completion.

Cannabis plant has not been approved as a medicine. It is important to remember that it has side effects for example, it can harm the lungs, weaken judgement, and affect memory. Until a substance is proved safe and effective to treat a given disease, it cannot be considered a medicine.

Cigarettes are made from tobacco which is also a plant. That hardly makes it safe. Both contain cancer-causing chemicals. Smoking anything is not good for the lungs.

While cannabis may cause one to feel more spiritual there are healthier ways of increasing spiritual well - being for example meditation and scripture reading.



6. There are no recorded deaths caused by cannabis so it is not harmful.

7. Smoking bhang promotes unity.

8. Bhang boosts your sexual energy.

9. Bhang makes you courageous and confident.

Although there may be no directly recorded deaths in Kenya it does not mean that cannabis is not linked to the tragedy. Cannabis is harmful to a still-developing brain and affects perception, memory and learning. It can also increase anxiety.

Long-term use may lead to amotivational syndrome: reduced energy and ability to concentrate, reduced desire to work and thus false sense of unity. In the end one experiences reduced interest in social or other activities.

One of the immediate effects of bhang is reduced inhibition which may lead to an increase in sexual behaviour. This is linked to risks such as HIV/AIDS, date rape, unwanted pregnancies, mental health problems, etc.

The feeling of courage is temporary and wears off as bhang is processed in the body. The underlying problem of being shy will remain. You can gain courage by developing social skills.

TOBACCO

Tobacco products are made entirely or partly from the tobacco leaf as raw material and are manufactured to be used for smoking, sucking, chewing or sniffing. These products include cigarettes, shisha, kuber, pouches and e-cigarettes. Breathing in smoke from cigarettes that other people are smoking (second hand/passive smoking) can also harm non-users. Once tobacco is in the body it is absorbed into the blood stream and affects the brain. It affects all parts of the body.

BRAIN:

Nicotine, the drug that makes tobacco addictive, goes to your brain. It makes you feel good when you are smoking, but it can make you anxious, nervous, moody and depressed after you smoke. Using tobacco can also cause headaches and dizziness.

MOUTH:

Tobacco stains your teeth and gives you bad breath. Tobacco ruins some of your taste buds, so you will not be able to taste your favourite foods as well.

LUNGS:

Smokers have trouble breathing because smoking damages the lungs. If you have asthma, you can have more frequent and serious attacks. Smoking causes a lot of coughing with phlegm (mucous). Tobacco can also increase emphysema (Lung Disease) and lung cancer.

HEART:

Smoking increases your heart rate and blood pressure. If you try to do activities like exercise or play sports, your heart has to work harder to keep up.

MUSCLES:

Less blood and oxygen flow to your muscles, which causes them to hurt more when you exercise or play sports.

SKIN:

Smoking causes dry, yellow skin and wrinkles. The smell sticks to your skin too.

MYTHS

1. Cigarette smoking is not as dangerous as some people say.
2. It is easy to quit smoking.
3. Most people smoke cigarettes.
4. Smoking is cool and sophisticated or classy.
5. Natural cigarettes or e-cigarettes are healthier than regular ones.
6. The effect of smoking is not something I will have to worry about until I am old.



FACTS

Cigarette smoking is one of the most serious causes of disease, disability and death.

Most people are not successful at quitting smoking, even though about 50 percent of all smokers have tried to quit at least once.

Relatively few people smoke cigarettes and even fewer are likely to smoke in the future.

Smoking has become socially unacceptable in most places. Indeed smoking in public is unacceptable and illegal.

There are no healthy cigarettes. All cigarettes contain harmful chemicals including nicotine.

Smoking is something that hurts you now. It reduces your ability to perform strenuous activities, stains teeth and fingers, gives you bad breath, affects your sense of taste and causes you to smell like smoke. Secondhand smoking is also dangerous and increases a nonsmoker's risk of getting smoking related diseases.

MYTHS

7. Kuber and shisha are not as harmful as cigarettes.
8. Smoking occasionally is not harmful.
9. When boys smoke cigarettes, they feel they are attracted to girls and they are able to lure them into relationships.
10. Smoking cigarettes prevents you from catching a cold or getting pneumonia.

FACTS

All forms of tobacco are harmful. Kuber is a smokeless form of tobacco disguised as a mouth freshener. Shisha smoking has the same health risks as cigarettes.

Occasional smoking can lead to one becoming a regular smoker and eventually cause addiction.

Acquiring social skills enables one to build healthy relationships.

On the contrary, smoking cigarettes has been proven to put people at risk of contracting respiratory diseases such as pneumonia, asthma and bronchitis.

MYTHS

11. You have to smoke for a long time in order to suffer negative effects.
12. Smoking makes you relax and relieve stress.

FACTS

Smoking is something that hurts you now. It reduces your ability to perform strenuous activities, stains teeth and fingers, gives you bad breath, affects your sense of taste and causes you to smell like smoke. In the long-run you get addicted and will suffer from diseases such as respiratory illnesses and cancer.

On the contrary the nicotine in tobacco is a stimulant and causes the heart to beat faster and makes the person feel more nervous.



KHAT

Khat is a stimulating drug made up of twigs and leaves obtained from a plant known as *Catha edulis*. The active ingredients in Khat are cathine and cathinone. It is found in two varieties: *miraa* and *muguka*.

In the body, khat:

- **Increases blood pressure and heart rate, and causes heart problems;**
- **Causes tooth decay and gum disease;**
- **Causes problems with the stomach and digestive tract, such as constipation, ulcers, pain, and tumors.**



MYTHS

- 1** Chewing khat helps you to stay awake to study for exams.
- 2** Khat is medicinal and a gift from God.
- 3** Khat chewing is a fun way of passing time and socializing.
- 4** Chewing khat is cool.
- 5** Driving after using khat is not as dangerous as driving after drinking alcohol.
- 6** Khat/Muguka improves your sexual performance.
- 7** Khat does not cause addiction.

FACTS

Khat may help one to stay awake longer however users may feel depressed and irritable, and have trouble eating and sleeping once the effect wears off.

There is no proven medicinal use of khat. Not all natural products/plants are healthy for human consumption.

There are healthy ways of having fun and socializing without using khat, such as engaging in sports, dancing and other hobbies.

Healthy is the new cool! Khat causes cracked lips, stained teeth and bad breath.

Like alcohol, khat affects motor coordination, slows reflexes and affects perception (the way we see and interpret events around us). Any of these changes increases the likelihood of an accident while driving.

Khat use requires long hours of chewing; one of the effects is spermatorrhea (excessive production of sperms without corresponding libido).

Khat causes both physical and psychological dependence i.e. the user experiences withdrawal symptoms like lack of sleep or emotional symptoms such as irritation and aggression and cannot function properly until they take another dose.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE ABUSE

Prescription drug abuse is use of a medication without a prescription, in a way other than as prescribed, or for the experience or feelings elicited.

Examples include cough syrup, pain medicine, sleeping pills, medicine for mental illness, performance enhancing products, nutritional supplements, beauty products, hormonal supplements.



WARNING SIGNS OF PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE ABUSE

- Increase of one's dose over time, as a result of growing tolerance to the drug and needing more to get the same effect;
- Changes in energy, mood, and concentration as a result of everyday responsibilities becoming less important than the need for the drug;
- Withdrawal from family and friends;
- Continued use of painkillers after the medical condition they were meant to relieve has improved;
- Visiting many doctors to obtain the drugs;
- Poor personal hygiene;
- Change in sleeping and eating habits;
- Constant cough, running nose and red, dull eyes;
- Pretending to misplace prescriptions;
- Absenteeism from school while pretending to be sick;
- Forgetting events that have taken place and experiencing blackouts;
- Becoming defensive/angry in response to simple questions in an attempt to hide a drug dependency, if users feel their secret is being discovered.

TIPS FOR PROPER USE OF MEDICATION

- ✓ Follow directions on your medication;
- ✓ Never change the dosage without consulting with your doctor;
- ✓ Never share your medication with someone or use another person's medication even if you have similar medical conditions;
- ✓ Be sure to only take medication prescribed to you;
- ✓ Avoid buying medicines without doctor's prescription.



MYTH

Sedatives help one sleep better if they have insomnia.

FACT

Your body is likely to develop tolerance for the drug which increases dependence. Adopt more natural ways to help you sleep.


MYTH


Prescription medication is safe because it has been prescribed by a doctor.


FACT


Just because it has been prescribed by a doctor does not make it safe. Safety is in proper use and discontinuation after the medical condition it was prescribed for is relieved.


Are you worried about yourself or someone you know who is using drugs? Here is what you can do.


-  **Gather information about the drug you think he may be taking.**


-  **Reflect on what worries you about them taking drugs. For example how they behave when they are under influence or how it affects their relationships.**


-  **Choose a good time to talk with them when you will have some privacy and they are not high.**


-  **Be prepared for an angry or negative reaction including denial.**

-  **Stay calm and reasonable. Do not let it turn into an argument.**

-  **Do not lecture. Share your concern. For example “I have noticed that you are not attending classes or hanging out with your usual friends. Is something going on? I am here for you”**

-  **Do not make assumptions about what they are doing or drugs they may be taking. Ask about it.**

-  **Let them know you care and remind them of some of their good qualities so they can feel appreciated.**

-  **Inform them that change is possible and advise that they can get help by talking to a teacher, parent or other adult they trust.**

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