

Substance Effects Match-Up

Recommended Age: 14+

Goal

- To discuss the desired effects and potential risks of different substances.

Instructions

- Tell the youth that most substances can be classified in one of five categories because of how they work in the body. We're going to go through five of them to explore what the potential desired effects (what people might want from taking the substance) and potential harms (risks or side effects) may be.

Option A: Substance Effects Matching Game Group Activity

- Use this option for a large group by using one set of cards (can be copied from following pages; make sure to cut along dotted lines) and calling on volunteers to place them. For a more collaborative activity, print several sets of cards (below) for small groups to work on together and compare results at the end as a large group. To increase the challenge or for groups with a lot of existing substance information, separate the Desired Effects and Potential Harms by cutting into two cards instead of one sheet.
- Place signs for 'Downers,' 'Uppers,' 'Cannabis,' 'Hallucinogens,' and 'Inhalants' on whiteboard or wall, or distribute to groups if doing small group version of this activity.
- Hand out Desired Effects and Potential Harms cards and have youth place them in the sections where they feel the cards belong.

Option B: Substance Effects Matching Game Handout

- Use this option for a more reflective activity. Print enough copies of the Substance Effects Matching Game (follows card activity) for your group. Have youth complete the matching game individually or in small groups. Compare the final answers as a large group and use information below for debrief.

- **Answer key for matching game:** Inhalants (D&G), Downers (E&J), Uppers (B&F), Cannabis (A&H), Hallucinogens (C&I)

Debrief

- Use the following info about substances, listed by category, to talk about the substances with youth in as much or as little detail as suits your group.

DOWNERS: alcohol, painkillers, heroin, fentanyl, etc.

Desired effects: Slow the body down, create a feeling of calm, help a person relax or sleep (sedative), reduce physical and/or emotional pain. Alcohol in small doses can make people feel energetic and happy.

Potential harms: Downers are called depressants because they slow down the central nervous system and this sometimes blocks messages getting to our brains. Alcohol lowers inhibitions and impairs judgment, changing the things we do and what we think of as safe or unsafe. The greatest risks often come from the things people do when they are drunk. The more alcohol is consumed, the more people can find themselves becoming increasingly sad, angry, uncoordinated, and/or slowed down. **Alcohol poisoning is when a person drinks more alcohol than their body can handle. “What are the signs of alcohol poisoning?”** Signs of alcohol poisoning are vomiting, clammy skin, shallow breathing, and passing out. An overdose can lead to a coma or death. Taking in amounts quickly puts us at a higher risk of alcohol poisoning. Taking too much of any downer can result in overdose because the body slows down too much and a person’s heartbeat or breathing can stop.

UPPERS: cocaine, caffeine, crystal meth, speed, etc.

Uppers or stimulants work by increasing dopamine levels in the brain.

Desired effects: May feel alert, happy, ‘high,’ excited, and an increased tolerance to pain.

Potential harms: With all uppers, there’s a crash at some point. At this time, people can feel depressed, upset, mad, or really tired. **“What might someone be tempted to do at this point to deal with how they are feeling?” Take more.** That’s what can make uppers so addictive. If a person uses too much of an upper (especially cocaine or speed/amphetamines), they

can overdose by having a heart attack. There is also a risk of nausea, headaches, racing heart, anxiety, mood swings, paranoia, severe depression, and violent behaviour.

CANNABIS: pot/weed, dried buds, hash, oil, edibles, shatter/dab, etc.

Desired effects: It can cause someone to feel relaxed, have a sense of well-being and a slowed sense of time, or provide pain relief.

Potential harms: THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) is one of the more prominent drugs in cannabis. It is hard to guess how strong it will be because THC levels vary from plant to plant. This means that it can be hard to predict what effect a particular batch will have. Some people can experience panic, paranoia, and memory problems, and it can lead to lung problems when smoked. **“How could cannabis affect someone’s driving?”** Since cannabis distorts thinking, people may think they are driving fine when they are high, even though they are not. Effects like slower reaction time, distorted perceptions of time and distance, decreased alertness, and increased drowsiness all make driving dangerous under the influence of weed.ⁱ ‘Greening out’ is a term used to describe a situation where a person may feel sick after using cannabis. Although not fatal, a person may go pale and sweaty, feel dizzy with ‘the spins,’ feel nauseous, and may even start vomiting. In Canada, the use of cannabis is now legal based on age. In Manitoba, legal age is 19+, while in other provinces it may be 18+.

HALLUCINOGENS: magic mushrooms, LSD (acid), ecstasy/MDMA, peyote, etc.

Hallucinogens change the way people think, see, and hear things. With hallucinogens, in general, the high depends on where you are, who you’re with, and how you’re feeling. **Ecstasy** (or MDMA) can be considered both a hallucinogen and an upper.

Desired effects: Include feelings of openness, euphoria, increased energy, and hallucinations. Some Indigenous cultures have teachings about specific medicines that are considered to be hallucinogens for ceremonial purposes to obtain information, knowledge, or purpose.ⁱⁱ These ceremonies are guided by a Traditional Healer, Medicine People, and Knowledge Keepers.

Potential harms: With mushrooms, **‘bad trips’ can happen.** This is where someone could feel fear, panic, and even terror. Other harms can be upset

stomach and confusion (which has led to accidental injury and death). Hallucinogens may cause lasting perception changes (streaking or flashbacks) or persistent psychosis. These effects may last for years. For people with a pre-existing mental illness, there is a possibility that both **hallucinogens** and **cannabis** could aggravate the illness.ⁱⁱⁱ **Ecstasy** side effects can include grinding of teeth and jaw clenching, increased heart rate and body temperature, anxiety, and paranoia. There is also a risk of liver/heart failure due to dehydration and hyperthermia (severely high fever).

INHALANTS: solvents and gasses (not intended for human consumption)

Desired effects: Can make a person feel euphoric, lightheaded or dizzy, and lose inhibitions.

Potential harms: Memory loss, loss of hearing and sense of smell, changes in personality, irreversible brain damage, death from either passing out or from **sudden sniffing death**, where the heart stops. **Stigma:** Harm can also include being judged negatively. Often in our society, people make negative assumptions about people who use inhalants, whereas if someone is using a different substance (like alcohol, for example), they may not be judged in the same way. **Negative assumptions are called stigma and that stigma may make it more difficult for someone to get help if they feel that their substance use is becoming problematic.**

Additional Activities

Ideally, this activity can be followed by:

- “Partying Safer” Brainstorm

DOWNERS

ALCOHOL, PAIN-KILLERS, HEROIN, SLEEPING PILLS...

UPPERS

COCAINE, CAFFEINE, CRYSTAL METH, SPEED, ECSTASY...

CANNABIS

POT/WEED, DRIED BUDS, HASH, OIL, EDIBLES, SHATTER/DAB...

HALLUCINOGENS

MAGIC MUSHROOMS, ACID, ECSTASY/MDMA, AYAHUASCA, PEYOTE...

INHALANTS

SOLVENTS AND GASES (NOT INTENDED FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION)

Desired effects:

- Slows the body down
- Makes you sleepy
- Pain relief (physical and emotional)

Potential harms:

- Lowered inhibitions - taking more risks
- Overdose
- Addiction/problematic use

Desired effects:

- Alert and awake
- Happy or 'high'
- Increased tolerance to pain

Potential harms:

- Crash (feeling depressed, upset, mad, or really tired)
- Overdose
- Addiction/problematic use

Desired effects:

- Quick and fast high
- Giddy and lightheaded or dizzy
- Immediate escape from reality

Potential harms:

- Memory loss, loss of hearing and sense of smell
- Brain damage
- Changes in personality

Desired effects:

- Seeing/hearing things that others don't
- Openness and sense of well-being
- More energy

Potential harms:

- Bad trip
- Nausea (upset stomach)
- Confusion and accidental injury

Desired effects:

- Feeling chilled out and giggly
- Calms upset stomach
- Slowed sense of time

Potential harms:

- Panic or paranoia
- Slowed reaction time/
less alert
- Greening out

Substance Use Info Matching Game!

Draw a line from each desired effect (what people want from using) & potential harm (side effects or risks) on the left to the correct substance category on the right.

POTENTIAL HARMS	DESIRED EFFECTS
	A) Feeling chilled out and giggly, calms upset stomach, slowed sense of time
	B) Alert and awake, happy or "high," increased tolerance to pain
	C) Seeing/hearing things that others don't, openness and sense of well-being, more energy
	D) Quick and fast high, giddy and lightheaded or dizzy, immediate escape from reality
	E) Slows the body down, makes you sleepy, pain relief (physical and emotional)
	F) Crash (feeling depressed, upset, mad or really tired), overdose, addiction/problematic use
	G) Memory loss, loss of hearing and sense of smell, brain damage, changes in personality
	H) Panic or paranoia, slowed reaction time/less alert, greening out
	I) Bad trip, nausea (upset stomach), confusion and accidental injury
	J) Lowered inhibitions: taking more risks, overdose, addiction/problematic use

Substance Categories:

Inhalants

Solvents and gasses not intended for human consumption (e.g., gasses, . . .)

Downers

Alcohol, pain-killers, heroin, sleeping

Uppers

Cocaine, caffeine, crystal meth, speed, ecstasy...

Cannabis

Pot/weed, dried buds, hash, oil, edibles, shatter/dab...

Hallucinogens

Magic mushrooms, acid, ecstasy/MDMA, ayahuasca, peyote...

ⁱCanadian Centre on Substance Abuse. (2016). *Effects of drugs on the body and driving*. Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

ⁱⁱAddictions Foundation of Manitoba. (n.d.). The basics: Hallucinogens (psychedelics). In *AFM*. Retrieved June 22, 2021, from <https://afm.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Hallucinogens.jpg>

ⁱⁱⁱIbid.