

Parent's

**Drug
Awareness**

Guide

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This booklet is produced by the RISK Project of Muskoka-Parry Sound in conjunction with the Muskoka-Parry Sound Health Unit and other caring community partners.

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**Bringing up
healthy,
happy
children is
a REWARDING
experience for parents.
But it can also be FULL of challenges...**

One of the biggest challenges is teaching our children how to make good choices and decisions.

Sometimes this is easy, and as parents we may even be there to help them make a certain decision, like what to wear or what to have for breakfast.



But what about the times we will not be there to help them with decisions that have more serious consequences... like whether or not to try drugs?

As a parent, there are things you can do to help prevent drug use by your children and prepare them for those decisions they will have to make. You can do this by educating yourself about drugs and by talking to your children about the risks and consequences of using drugs.

Remember, as a parent you **DO** influence your children's beliefs and attitudes, and you **CAN** help to shape their future choices.

This booklet is designed as a reference guide for parents, and is filled with tips and information to help you deal with the issue of drugs with your children.

DRUG FACTS - DID YOU KNOW...?

- The rate of smoking amongst Ontario students in Grade 7 is 1 in 20. This rate doubles by Grade 8. Those who smoke in Grade 7 reported they had started by Grade 4.
- In 2001, 36.1% of Ontario students in Grade 7 reported drinking alcohol at least once during the past year. By Grade 8, more than half of students are drinking. Sixteen percent reported drinking by Grade 4.
- In the last month, 4.2% of Grade 7's reported binge drinking (having more than 5 drinks at one sitting). The rate for Grade 8's is 12%.



- 5.1% of Grade 7 students in Ontario reported using marijuana during the past year. For Grade 8's, the rate increased to 12%.
- Illegal drug use amongst Ontario students has steadily increased since 1993, particularly the use of marijuana, ecstasy, and hallucinogens.

(Source: "Drug Use Among Ontario Students— Ontario Student Drug Use Survey, 2001", Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Ontario)

What is a drug?

A drug is a chemical substance that changes the way your body and/or mind works.

Some drugs and substances are legal. These include tobacco, alcohol and caffeine.

Medicines, like prescription drugs or products that you can buy at a store (e.g. cough medicine, headache pills, etc.), are legal. If they are used properly they can be beneficial to your health.

Other drugs are not legal. These include substances like:

1. Marijuana (or Cannabis)
2. LSD
3. Cocaine
4. Heroin
5. Ecstasy

ALL drugs change how your body and/or mind works, and can be harmful.

Why do kids use drugs?

Kids try or use drugs for different reasons, such as:



1. **Pressure from friends** – they don't know how to say NO
2. **Influence of friends** - they want to be part of the group
3. **Curiosity** – they wonder what it is like
4. **Image** - it's "cool" and "fun"
5. **Social** - availability and acceptability of drugs
6. **Boredom** – they have nothing else to do
7. **Following an example** - parents or brothers/sisters use drugs
8. **Pleasure** – it feels good
9. **Coping** – to relieve pressure, stress and/or depression
10. **Self esteem**- they don't feel good about themselves

Drug descriptions

There are several different types of drugs, each producing their own set of symptoms and consequences. They are:

DRUG TYPE	PRODUCT	STREET NAME	SYMPTOMS	POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES
TOBACCO	Cigarettes	Smokes, cigs	Increased pulse rate and blood pressure, cooler skin, yellowed fingers, decreased appetite, less capable of vigorous physical activity	Bad breath, wrinkles, yellow fingers and teeth, shortness of breath, infections of lungs, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, increased risk of cancer, stomach ulcers, blood clots, narrowed blood vessels, addiction
ALCOHOL	Wine, liquor, beer, coolers, liqueurs	Booze	Less inhibition, impaired judgment and thinking, slower reflexes, mood changes, flushed face, slurred speech, slowed breathing	Injury, date rape, impaired driving crash, damage to liver and stomach, heart disease, brain and nerve damage, convulsions, shakes, death from alcohol poisoning, addiction, legal problems
CANNABIS	Marijuana, Hashish, Hash Oil	Pot, grass, weed, reefer, joint, Mary-Jane, hash, ganja	Slow thinking, slow reflexes, dilated pupils, mood swings, increased appetite, dryness of the mouth, increased pulse rate, hallucinations, delusions	Injury, impaired driving, legal problems, memory impairment, weight gain, increased risk of cancer, paranoid thinking, psychological dependence requiring more of the drug to get the same effect, addiction
OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS	Tylenol, Gravol, sleeping pills, diet pills, pep pills, caffeine, cough medicine		Symptoms will vary depending on the drug and the amount of drug taken. Many people take large doses of these drugs to get the desired high.	Overdose, bizarre behaviour, sleepiness, loss of appetite, weight loss, agitation, depression, addiction, hallucinations, organ damage, stomach ulcers

DRUG TYPE	PRODUCT	STREET NAME	SYMPTOMS	POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES
STIMULANTS (speeds up the activity of the central nervous system)	Cocaine, Crack Cocaine, Amphetamine, Methamphetamine, Ritalin, MDMA (ecstasy), Stimulants, Dexamphetamine	Coke, snow, freebase, crack, rock, base, uppers, ice, crank, speed, meth, crystal, snow, MDMA, E, xtc, eccy, love drug	Dry mouth and lips, tremors, excitability, euphoria, anxiety, talkativeness, insomnia, sweating, dilated pupils, weight loss, paranoia, agitation, hallucinations, cracked teeth through grinding	Weight loss, high blood pressure, dehydration, anxiety, paranoia, chronic sleep problems, nervousness, hallucinations, eating or sleeping disorders, depression, violent behaviour, convulsions, respiratory problems, death from heart failure or suicide, nerve cell damage, legal problems, addiction
DEPRESSANTS (slows down the activity of the central nervous system)	Benzodiazepines, barbituates, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, alcohol	Benzos, downers	Drowsiness, uncoordination, confusion, tremors, slurred speech, depressed pulse rate, shallow respiration	Depression, anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, changes in eyesight, dependence, requiring more of the drug to get the same effect, severe withdrawal symptoms, suicide, addiction, legal problems
HALLUCINOGENS (changes the way a person experiences things and distorts reality)	LSD, MDA, PCP, Psilocybin	LSD - acid, trips, microdot, blotter PCP - angel dust, hog Psilocybin - magic mushrooms	Euphoria, trancelike state, increased pulse rate, hallucinations, paranoia, insomnia	Impaired judgment and coordination, self-inflicted injury, violent behaviour, depression, anxiety, paranoia, unpredictable flashbacks, addiction, legal problems
OPIATES (strong painkillers)	Heroin, Morphine, Methadone, Codeine, Dilaudid, Kapanol, Pethidine, MS Contin	Heroin - smack, H, junk Morphine - M, morph Methadone - done	Drowsiness, euphoria, lethargy, nausea, constipation, constricted pupils, slowed breathing	Overdose, dependence, mood swings, chronic constipation, addiction, death from overdose, HIV and hepatitis infections through sharing of needles
INHALANTS (chemically-made solvents and aerosols)	Glue, gas, solvents, aerosols	Laughing gas, rush, bullet	Impaired coordination, slurred speech, nausea, vomiting, slowed breathing	Pains in the chest, muscles, joints, brain damage, heart trouble, severe depression, loss of appetite, fatigue, nosebleeds, diarrhea, bizarre behaviour, sudden death, suffocation, legal problems, addiction

Tips

TALKING ABOUT DRUGS- for parents of young children

Drug use is a part of everyday life. Sometimes we forget that cough syrup, headache pills, alcohol and tobacco are drugs. Children learn about drugs in school, from other kids and on television, but what we do in our own homes is the beginning of drug education.

You are your children's most important teacher. Your words and actions help shape their ideas about alcohol and other drugs.

Young children also learn by watching you and others. Has your child ever picked up a beer bottle, asked for a pill to feel better or pretended to smoke a cigarette? Children copy what they see.

Understanding the safe use of medicine

You can start to tell your children about medicines even when they are very young. For example:

- "Medicine is not candy."
- "Even a little too much medicine can hurt you."
- "We use medicine only when we really need it. If I get a headache, I try to rest, use a cold cloth or get fresh air to get rid of it."



Let's talk about smoking



Here are some common situations and possible responses to help you talk with your children about smoking:

Look Mommy, I'm smoking!

"I see you're pretending to smoke! I'm glad it's just a pretend cigarette, because we know cigarette smoking is really bad for you."

If smoking is so bad, why do you smoke?

"I know that smoking is not good for my body. Once you start to smoke, it is very hard to quit. I wish I had never started. I have to make sure I keep the smoke away from you."

Let's talk about alcohol

Alcohol is a legal and accepted drug in our society. Our own attitudes and use influence our children's view of alcohol. Try to imagine your children watching you and others drink. Do they see you unwind with a drink? Do all your social events and celebrations include alcohol? Do you ever ask your children to bring a drink to you?

It is important to let your children know your family's healthy values and rules about drinking.

What can I do...

to prevent my kids from using drugs?



1. Educate yourself

Learn about alcohol and other drugs. Become familiar with the types of drugs kids are using today. Understand the risks and consequences of taking drugs.

2. Be a good example

Your behaviour can greatly influence your children's behaviour. Evaluate your own level of alcohol consumption and use of medications and other drugs.

3. Help your kids feel good about themselves

Children who feel good about themselves are less likely to try drugs and alcohol. Communicate with them regularly about their lives and listen to them. Teach them how to make good decisions by looking at a problem, thinking about the choices available and the results of those choices, and deciding what to do. Let them know you love them. Praise and encourage them.



4. Be a part of their lives

Make time for your children. Take an interest in their interests. Get to know their friends. Don't be afraid to ask them where they're going and who they're going out with. Do things together, especially as a family, even if it's just eating one meal together every day.

5. Set clear rules

Most children expect and want ground rules from their parents. Make them a part of setting the rules and consequences of breaking the rules. Once you have rules, stick to them and enforce them.

6. Teach them how to say "no"

Role-play scenarios with your children so they will be prepared to say "no" in situations when drugs are being offered. Refusal lines can vary from the very simple: "No thanks, I'm not interested," to the very creative: "I have enough other ways to get into trouble."

7. Be honest

If your children ask, don't pretend to know everything about drugs. Be prepared to say, "I don't know but I will try to find out." Be honest and clear about where you stand on the issue of drugs, that way your children will find it easier to be honest with you.

8. Pick the right moment

Use "teachable" moments to discuss drugs with your children. When watching TV, listening to music, or anytime that the issue of drugs arises when you're with your children, use that as an opportunity to discuss the topic.

9. Nip problems in the bud

If you think that your child has used or tried drugs, don't ignore it. The problem will not just go away on its own. Approach the topic calmly with your child. Talk to him about how dangerous drugs can be. Find out what's bothering your child and why he has tried drugs. Let your child know that you care and love him.

10. Share your healthy beliefs and values

Instilling your values in your child is an important and natural part of child rearing. Make sure your child understands your feelings about her not using drugs. Challenge her to think about her own beliefs and values. Discuss with her the benefits and consequences of the choices she makes.

11. Provide them with alternative activities

Encourage your children to meet new kids and join different groups. Girl Guides, Scouts, sports teams and library programs are some examples of alternative activities for your children to participate in.



What to look for if you suspect drug use by your child

Signs of drug use by your children can include the following,

BUT REMEMBER...

some of these changes are normal signs of growing up.

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES

- School grades drop, skips classes
- Loses job
- Needs more money
- Changes friends, doesn't bring them home
- Disregard for rules, legal problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Spends more time in room and/or away from home
- New interests/hobbies
- Late night phone calls

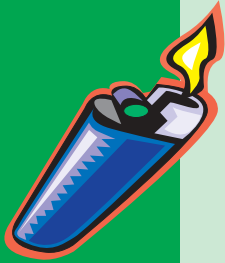
PHYSICAL CHANGES

- Red eyes
- Shortness of breath
- Trouble talking or walking
- Drowsiness or difficulty sleeping
- Changes in appearance/hygiene
- Has the munchies or a decrease in appetite

MOOD CHANGES

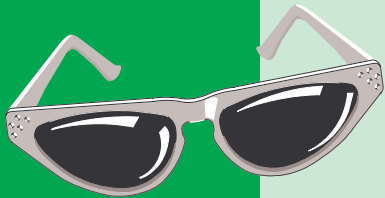
- Secretive, moody, uncooperative
- Depressed or withdrawn
- Lack of interest or concern, apathy
- Cranky or difficult to get along with
- Argumentative, anxious

Things associated with drug use



- Cigarette papers – for rolling joints/ homemade cigarettes
- Hash pipes or glass water pipes – for smoking hash or crack
- Blackened knives – for burning drugs
- Cans or bottles with holes in them – for smoking drugs
- Pills, powder, dried leaves in a bag, or other substances you can't identify
- Pieces of foil
- Lighters
- Syringes – for injecting drugs
- Small scales - for weighing drugs

Things used to cover up drug use



- Sunglasses – to cover up red eyes
- Eye-drops – to reduce blood-shot eyes
- Mouth wash or spray – to cover up breath odours
- Incense – to cover up the smell of smoking drugs

What if my child is using drugs?



If you find out or suspect that your child has tried or is using drugs, you need to confront your child about it. Here are some tips:

- Don't panic – be calm and rational. Take time to think out a plan of action.
- Don't ridicule or lecture – respect each other.
- Pick the right time to talk with your child with no interruptions.
- Focus on the behaviour first, then the reasons why.
- Set boundaries and consequences and follow through.
- Ask for help from outside resources.

Don't forget that you are not alone. There are various community resources that can assist you and your child, such as a local drug and alcohol worker, a doctor, a mental health worker or a public health nurse.

Resources & Information

If you need free and confidential help or information about drugs, the following resources and services are available:

Addiction Outreach Muskoka-Parry Sound

Offices in Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Huntsville, Sundridge, Burk's Falls and Parry Sound.

In West or East Parry Sound call:
1-800-668-5192

In Muskoka call: 1-800-668-1856

Family, Youth & Child Services of Muskoka

Bracebridge – 645-4426
Huntsville – 789-8866

Algonquin Child & Family Services

Bracebridge – 645-3155
Parry Sound – 746-4293
Sundridge – 384-5225

"How to Drug Proof Your Kids" Program

Contact the Huntsville office of the Muskoka-Parry Sound Health Unit

Muskoka-Parry Sound Health Unit

Bracebridge – 645-4471
Huntsville – 789-8813
Burk's Falls – 382-2018
Parry Sound – 746-5801
Website: www.mpshu.on.ca

Centre for Addiction & Mental Health

1-800-463-6273
website: www.camh.net

Canada's Drug Strategy

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/cds-sca/cds

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse

www.ccsa.ca

Health Canada Tobacco Control Initiative

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/tobaccoreduction

Canadian Cancer Society Tobacco Reduction

www.cancer.ca

National Clearinghouse on Tobacco and Health Program

www.ncth.ca

Canadian Health Network

www.canadian-health-network.ca



*Information in this booklet was borrowed from a variety of sources including:
“An Early Start” (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health) and “Ready or Not” (Health Canada).*