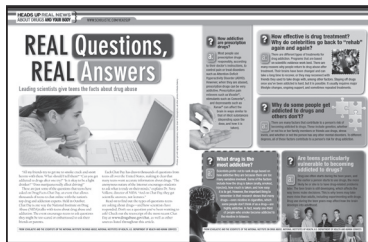


Real Questions, Real Answers About Drugs

In This Installment:

- Answers to some of teens' most frequently asked questions about drugs and addiction
- Where teens can find reliable, science-based answers to their questions about drugs
- Tips for making smart choices when faced with important decisions



Dear Teacher:

The teen years are filled with situations that raise questions about drugs. Getting answers to these questions can help teens make healthy decisions when faced with peer pressure about drug use. If they know the facts about how drugs may affect their brains and bodies, they'll be more likely to say "no."

But many teens don't know where to get the facts about drugs. Some teens may feel comfortable talking to their parents, teachers, or other trusted adults, but many may be too embarrassed, or fear getting in trouble. Instead, they may rely on word of mouth or other unreliable sources to get information.

In this year's first installment of *Heads Up*, we give answers to some of the questions that teens have asked most frequently during NIDA's Drug Facts Chat Day—an annual event where teens can anonymously send questions to the nation's top drug and addiction experts. We also highlight other reliable sources of information about drugs and give teens tips for making smart decisions. We hope you will share the article with your students and encourage them to seek out science-based answers to their questions.

Sincerely,

Nora D. Volkow, M.D.

Director

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)



Lesson Outline

KEY CONCEPTS

- Teens frequently face situations that can raise tough questions about drugs. They need safe, reliable sources to get answers to their questions.
- Some teens may be afraid to ask adults questions about drugs. They may instead rely on potentially inaccurate information gathered from friends.
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) provides several resources where teens can anonymously get science-based answers to their questions. Resources include the Heads Up series, NIDA's Web site, and NIDA's Drug Facts Chat Day.
- Teens can put the facts they learn about drugs into action to make smart decisions, or to help a family member or friend who is in trouble with drugs.

BEFORE READING

- Have students think of some questions they may have about drugs. Acknowledge that their questions may come from many different perspectives or experiences. Then have volunteers share their questions. Some examples might include: Which drugs are the most dangerous? Is it okay to use drugs occasionally?

- Ask students where they might go to get answers to their questions about drugs and addiction, or to find information about how to help a friend with a drug-abuse problem. Discuss the pros and cons of various sources of information.

AFTER READING

- Did any of the questions written by real teens in the article surprise you? How many of the questions were ones you have heard teens ask in the past?
- What are some safe, reliable resources for answering questions about drugs?

CRITICAL THINKING

- Why is it important to ask questions about drugs or drug addiction?
- How can having the facts help you make decisions in situations involving drugs?

WRITING PROMPT

- Have students write a scene with dialogue in which a teen uses facts about drugs to make a smart decision in a difficult situation.

For printable past and current articles in the **HEADS UP** series, as well as activities and teaching support, go to www.drugabuse.gov/parent-teacher.html or www.scholastic.com/HEADSUP.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Getting the Facts About Drugs and Addiction

Below are some questions asked by teens during NIDA's Drug Facts Chat Day. Pretend that you are a scientist at NIDA who is writing answers to these questions. You can find facts to support your answers by doing research at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov>. Check out the "Facts on Drugs" section.

1. "There are kids in my school who smoke pot and they seem okay. What's the big deal?"
(Hint: Research the short- and long-term effects of using marijuana.)

2. "How many people die from smoking cigarettes?" (Hint: Research the effects of smoking and nicotine addiction.)

3. "Can steroids cause any problems with your body?" (Hint: Research how steroids affect the hormone balances in the body.)

4. "What are the effects of the use of ecstasy?" (Hint: Research how MDMA [ecstasy] affects the brain and body.)

5. Write your own question and then research the answer.