

Drug Abuse and Impairment

— A message from Dr. Nora D. Volkow,
Director of NIDA



Dear Teacher:

As an educator, you know that the choices teens make can have profound effects, both immediate and long-term. You also know how important it is for your students to function to their full ability, both inside the classroom and beyond.

This latest installment of *Heads Up* from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and Scholastic alerts students to important information on how *impairment* from drug abuse can affect a wide range of one's abilities and have far-reaching consequences. There's also new information on the dangers of impairment and "drugged driving," an especially serious issue for teens.

I urge you to share this *Heads Up* article with your students, and thank you for working with NIDA to bring facts about drug abuse and real-world consequences to your class.

Sincerely,

Nora D. Volkow, M.D.
Director of NIDA



In This Installment

- How drugs of abuse act on the brain and impair a wide range of abilities.
- Consequences related to impairment from drug abuse.
- Latest research on "drugged driving" and its dangers, especially for teens.

Assessment Tools

Use the Student Activity Reproducible on the back of this page as an assessment quiz to determine what your students have learned about impairment from drug abuse and its consequences.

More Information

For more information on drugged driving:
www.nida.nih.gov/Infofacts/driving.html

For more facts about drugs and the body, including more information on marijuana's effects on the brain:
www.scholastic.com/headsup and
www.teens.drugabuse.gov

For "Monitoring the Future" survey results:
www.monitoringthefuture.org/

Lesson Plan & Reproducible

Preparation: Make copies of the Student Activity Reproducible for each student.

OBJECTIVE Students will understand: how drug abuse impairs one's thinking and behavior; what some of the consequences of impairment are; what the dangers of "drugged driving" are.

NATIONAL SCIENCE EDUCATION STANDARDS
Life Work; Self-Regulation; Thinking and Reasoning

WHAT YOU WILL DO

- Introduce the topic of *impairment* by asking students to discuss the *consequences* of drug abuse. Ask students what they think impairment from drug abuse means, and why it can lead to serious consequences.
- Have students read the article "Out of It." When they have finished, begin a discussion by asking, *What are short-term and long-term consequences that can be caused by drug abuse? How can impairment from drug abuse lead to these consequences?*

- After the discussion, have students complete the reproducible. When they have finished, reveal the correct answers.
- Wrap up the lesson by discussing with students: *How would you respond to someone who says, "As long as you're not addicted to drugs, or don't overdose, drugs can't cause much harm"?*

ANSWERS TO STUDENT ACTIVITY REPRODUCIBLE:

1. c; 2. e; 3. b; 4. d; 5. e; 6. b; 7. a; 8. c; 9. b; 10. a.

ANSWERS TO STUDENT MAGAZINE QUESTIONS:

Vocabulary: 1. c; 2. b; 3. d; 4. e; 5. a;
Reading Comprehension: 1. b; 2. e;
3. c; 4. a.

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.

What Do You Know About Impairment From Drug Abuse?

Answer the questions below to find out what you know about drug abuse, impairment, and the dangerous consequences of “drugged driving.” For each question, fill in the circle next to the correct answer.

- Which of the following health problems is not related to drug abuse?**
 - liver dysfunction
 - cancer
 - psoriasis
 - infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS
 - heart disease
- Drug use can affect:**
 - memory.
 - moods.
 - judgment.
 - learning.
 - all of the above.
- “Diminished ability” best describes:**
 - the chemical process by which drugs enter the bloodstream
 - impairment from drug abuse
 - lack of potency in a drug
 - engine trouble
- What is the number-one cause of death among people ages 15–20?**
 - measles
 - rheumatic fever
 - muscular dystrophy
 - motor-vehicle accidents
- All drugs of abuse act on a person’s brain and can impair a wide range of abilities, including:**
 - how one perceives something.
 - the ability to think clearly and make judgments.
 - the ability to pay attention, to focus, and to respond.
 - the ability to maintain physical balance and coordination.
 - all of the above.
- The negative effects of impairment happen only when drugs are used in high doses or after prolonged use, not after only one use.**
 - true
 - false
- The most common illegal drug found in impaired drivers and crash victims is marijuana.**
 - true
 - false
- In a 2006 survey, what percentage of high-school seniors reported driving under the influence of marijuana?**
 - 2.5%
 - 26.7%
 - 10.6%
 - 17.3%
- When using drugs, you can respond more quickly to situations.**
 - true
 - false
- When impaired, a person can act in ways he or she wouldn’t normally act if not impaired, such as getting involved in dangerous social situations.**
 - true
 - false