

# Health Literacy and Drug Abuse



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

## In This Installment

- Important facts about how drug abuse and addiction affect health.
- Tips for students on how to take action to stay healthy.

## 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 the health effects of drug abuse.

## More Information

For more information about the connection between general health and drug abuse and addiction, read NIDA Notes, "Beyond the Brain: The Medical Consequences of Abuse and Addiction," at [www.nida.nih.gov/NIDA\\_Notes/NNVol18N6/DirRepVol18N6.html](http://www.nida.nih.gov/NIDA_Notes/NNVol18N6/DirRepVol18N6.html).

## Dear Teacher:

As an educator, you know how important it is for your students to make informed choices. When it comes to drug abuse, knowing the facts is crucial to helping students make decisions that can impact their health and safety.

In this latest installment of *Heads Up*, students will find out how drug abuse and addiction affect one's overall health. Although at its core a brain disease, drug addiction produces harmful consequences throughout the body.

We thank you for sharing the important facts in this article with your students. By doing so, you are not only helping them be more health-literate, but are also helping them keep safe.

Sincerely,  


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



## Lesson Plan & Reproducible

**Preparation:** Before the lesson, make two photocopies of the Student Activity Reproducible for a pre- and post-lesson quiz.

**OBJECTIVE** Students will understand some of the serious health consequences of drug abuse and addiction.

**NATIONAL SCIENCE EDUCATION STANDARDS** Life Science; Science in Personal and Social Perspectives

### WHAT YOU WILL DO

- Introduce the topic of drug abuse and health by asking students what they consider the most important health issues facing teens today. Give students time for discussion.
- Distribute copies of the Student Activity Reproducible. Tell students to write their name on the paper and answer the questions. Explain that they will answer the questions again after they read the article.
- Have students read "Get the Facts: Drug Abuse Puts Your Whole Body at Risk" in their magazines. When they have finished,

begin a discussion: *What are some of the ways in which drug abuse and addiction affect the health issues you identified earlier? What are some ways you can protect your health with regard to drugs? Why is it important to get the facts about your health?*

- After the discussion, have students complete the reproducible again. When they have finished, reveal the correct answers.
- Wrap up the lesson by asking students: *How would you respond to someone who says, "Drugs mess with your head a bit; what's the big deal?" or, "I'm healthy; what's there to worry about with drugs?"*

For further facts about the health effects of drugs on the body, visit [www.scholastic.com/headsup](http://www.scholastic.com/headsup).

### ANSWERS TO REPRODUCIBLE:

1. d; 2. a; 3. b; 4. a; 5. a; 6. d; 7. c; 8. c; 9. a; 10. 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](http://www.drugabuse.gov/parent-teacher.html) or [www.scholastic.com/HEADSUP](http://www.scholastic.com/HEADSUP).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## What Do You Know About the Health Effects of Drug Abuse?

Answer the questions below to find out what you know about the health effects of drug abuse and addiction.

1. **A prescription medication**
  - a. is always safe because a doctor prescribes it.
  - b. is safe to take, even if prescribed for someone else, as long as you have the same symptoms.
  - c. is safe to take, even if prescribed for someone else, as long as you follow the directions.
  - d. is not safe for you if it has not been prescribed for you.
2. **Diseased gums and teeth can result from**
  - a. methamphetamine
  - b. cocaine
  - c. Vicodin®
  - d. opioids
3. **Which of the following can be a harmful effect of opioids like Vicodin® and OxyContin®?**
  - a. “meth mouth”
  - b. severe respiratory depression
  - c. bone-marrow damage
  - d. hearing loss
4. **Blackouts, hearing loss, and liver, kidney, and bone-marrow damage are effects of**
  - a. inhalants
  - b. methamphetamine
  - c. cocaine
  - d. nicotine
5. **Premature aging of the skin can result from use of**
  - a. tobacco
  - b. cocaine
  - c. opioids
  - d. inhalants
6. **Effects of drug abuse can occur**
  - a. when drugs are used at high doses
  - b. after prolonged use of drugs
  - c. after one use
  - d. any of the above
7. **The risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and other infectious diseases is greatly increased by**
  - a. injection drug use
  - b. risky behavior due to drug abuse
  - c. both *a* and *b*
  - d. none of the above
8. **The main chemical found in tobacco that causes addiction is**
  - a. tar
  - b. caffeine
  - c. nicotine
  - d. menthol
9. **More than half of people addicted to drugs have also had some form of mental illness.**
  - a. true
  - b. false
10. **Drug abuse is linked to the top medical problems in the United States.**
  - a. true
  - b. false