

Drug education

KS5/Post-16, Lesson 2: Medicines and substances



Medicines and substances

This is the second of five lessons for key stage 5 on understanding the risks and consequences of substance use; and making informed decisions about alcohol and other drugs. This lesson focuses on different types of substances, including prescription and 'over-the-counter' medicines, and how to safely access and seek reliable information about these.

Learning objective

To learn about different substances, including medicines, and how to seek reliable information about these.

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- describe differences between prescribed and over-the-counter medicines
- identify risks of buying substances online and explain how to access prescription medicine safely
- evaluate reliable sources of information about substances
- explain how someone can seek support if they are concerned about substances that they, or others they know, have used

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Post-it notes
- Resource 1: *Overheard conversation* [1 per student]
- Resource 2: *All about medicines* [1 per pair]
- Resource 2a: *All about medicines – key terms* [support option, as required]
- Resource 3: *Getting help* [1 per pair]
- Resource 3a: *Getting help – alternative* [support option, as required]
- Resource 3b: *Getting help – answers* [1 copy for teacher reference]
- Resource 4: *Accessing prescription medicine* [1 per pair]

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance notes before teaching this lesson. These include relevant subject knowledge for this topic, guidance on creating a safe learning environment, and curriculum links.

Baseline assessment

Baseline assessment activity (Slide 10, 5 mins)

Using **Resource 1: Overheard conversation**, share the snippet of a conversation between friends, Lexi and Paddy. Then, ask students to write down their responses to the questions on slide 10.

As this is a baseline assessment, students should work on their own and avoid discussing their answers while they complete the activity.

When they have finished, take brief feedback from volunteers. Ask them not to add to their written answers at this point, as they will return to these at the end of the lesson. Take this opportunity to assess what students already know about different types of substances, and their understanding of how to safely access information about them. If students show a weaker understanding, for example of what is meant by prescription or 'over-the-counter' medicine, you may want to adapt the lesson by spending more time on core activities one and two, guiding students through the information on the resources provided, and answering their questions using the suggested key learning points.

Introduction (Slides 11-12, 2 mins)

Introduce the learning objective and outcomes. Explain that today's lesson will explore different types of substances, including prescription and 'over-the-counter' medicines, how to find accurate and reliable information about these, and how to safely access medicines when needed.

Use slide 12 to revisit ground rules for the lesson and remind students about the question box.


Core activities

All about medicines (Slides 13-17, 15 mins)

In pairs, ask students to read the information from healthcare professionals on **Resource 2: All about medicines**.

Then, using the frequently asked questions on slide 13, ask pairs to take turns to play a young person asking each question, and a professional providing a response, swapping roles for each question.

Ask volunteers to share their responses, before talking through the key learning on slides 14-17.

 **Support:** Ask students to use the key term bank on **Resource 2a: All about medicines – key terms**, to help them respond to the FAQs.

Getting help (Slides 18-19, 15 mins)

Reminding students of Lexi and Paddy from the baseline assessment, ask them to read the next part of their conversation on **Resource 3: Getting help**, in pairs, and answer the questions on the sheet.

Take feedback, using **Resource 3b: Getting help – answers** and slide 19 to guide discussion and draw out key learning.

During discussion, acknowledge that waiting lists for appointments with GPs and other specialists can prevent someone from getting the help they need straight away, but that it is still important to seek this support at the earliest opportunity. While waiting for an appointment, someone might access other support, such as by talking to a friend, as Lexi has, or from a local support service or charity specialising in mental health and wellbeing.



Support: Ask students to look at the sources of information about medicines on **Resource 3a: Getting help - alternative** and rank them according to how reliable each source would be for gathering information about medicines and prescriptions, considering any potential risks of using these. *[For feedback and key learning on this, see Q5 on Resource 3b: Getting help - answers.]*



Challenge: Ask students to script the beginning of a conversation between Lexi and a healthcare professional, such as a GP or mental health nurse.

Information relay (Slides 20-23, 10 mins)

Separate students into groups of four and explain that they are going to complete an 'information relay'. In each group, ask one pair of students to take two minutes to read the information on **Resource 4: Accessing prescription medicine**, explaining how to safely access prescriptions or other medicines. The other pair should look at the prompts on slide 20 to help them prepare for what the information relayed to them next might be.

Once two minutes has passed, ask the first two students to explain the key ideas to the second pair in the group, taking two minutes to complete this step. They can use the sheet to help them. The second pair should note down any key terms or phrases that help explain how to safely access prescription medicine, or how to seek support about using medicines or other substances, without looking at **Resource 4**.

Then, ask students to put **Resource 4** and their notes to the side and work in their groups of four to explain what someone can do to safely access medicine or seek support, by writing all they can remember on post-it notes. They should take no more than 60 seconds to do this.

When they have finished, ask each group to feedback one key piece of information from their post-it notes to the class, eliminating any groups who repeat what another group has said. Continue to ask students to feed back until one group remains, or they have relayed all of their information.

Finally, ask students to use **Resource 4** and their notes to check that they have not made any mistakes or missed any important information, such as how to check if a pharmacy is registered with the General Pharmaceutical Council, or calling 999 or 111 for medical assistance.



Challenge: Ask students to organise the information into three to five top tips that a young person can remember when looking for help and support in relation to using medicines.

Reflection and endpoint assessment

Reflection and endpoint assessment (Slides 24–26, 10 mins)

Remind students of the learning outcomes for the lesson and ask them to return to the baseline assessment and add any new learning, using these as a prompt. Then, ask them to imagine they are a doctor, writing advice to Lexi. Their advice should include:

- the difference between prescription and ‘over-the-counter’ medicine
- a clear explanation of why it is important to only use prescription medicine if it has been given by a healthcare professional
- how to access safe and reliable information about substances, including medicines
- how Lexi could access further help and support

Ask students to reflect on one of the following questions, either thinking to themselves or writing an answer:

- If I need help or advice about medicines in the future, who can I go to for support?
- If I’m experiencing difficulties or challenges with my health, what can I do?

As this is a personal reflection activity, students do not need to share their answers with anyone else.

Signposting support

Signposting support (Slide 27, 3 mins)

If time allows, answer any questions from the question box that are appropriate to answer in front of the class. If students have written their names, keep the answers anonymous.

Remind students how they can access further advice, guidance and support related to medicines or substance use, including:

- Speak to staff in school such as their form tutor, head of year, school nurse, or a member of the safeguarding team
- Visit their GP or www.111.nhs.uk, or phone 111
- Visit Childline, which can be contacted by young people under 19, at www.childline.org.uk; or by phone on 0800 1111
- Visit FRANK at www.talktofrank.com/get-help/find-support-near-you to find local support services
- Visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/medicines-information for information about medicines from the NHS
- Check GPC-registered pharmacies in Britain using www.pharmacyregulation.org/registers

Extension activity

Infobite (Slide 28)

Ask students to use the information from the final activity in the lesson to create a short informative campaign, aimed at 16- to 19-year-olds, about accessing medicines, or information about medicines, safely. This might be through a recorded podcast extract, a mock-up of a social media post, or a short video.