

Drug education

Year 5-6, Lesson 2: Legal and illegal drugs



Legal and illegal drugs

This is the second of four drug education lessons, for year 5-6. This lesson focuses on legal and illegal drugs, other than medicines, and the associated effects and risks. Pupils also explore how the risk of drug use may vary depending on factors such as the strength of the drug, how much is taken and how often, the person and the situation.

Classroom-ready PowerPoint versions of the lesson plans are available to [members](#) of the PSHE Association.

Learning objective

To learn about some of the risks and effects of legal and illegal drug use.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will be able to:

- explain that there are risks associated with using any type of drug and identify some of the risks and effects of drug use
- recognise that drugs have laws related to them and that some drugs are illegal to own, use, intend to give, or give, to others
- analyse the level of risk in different situations, identifying that drugs can affect people in different ways
- explain that for some people drug use can become an unhealthy habit that can be difficult to break but there is support available to help people; and where to report any concerns they have

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.

It is important to consider sensitivities and prior knowledge about specific pupils' circumstances. Pupils in the class will have a range of experience and understanding of legal and illegal drugs, and some may have families that have been affected by drug use. If any safeguarding concerns arise during this lesson, these should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Dice [one per group]
- Resource 1: *Drugs cards* [one set per class]
- Resource 2: *Effects and risks cards* [one of each set per group]
- Resource 3: *Drugs fact sheets* [one copy of each]
- Resource 4: *Drugs and risk scenarios* [one per pair]
- Resource 4a: *Drugs and risk scenarios - support* [one per pair or group]
- Resource 4b: *Drugs and risk scenarios - challenge* [one per pair]

Key words

drug

substance

law

habit

legal

illegal

Baseline assessment

Introduction (Slides 10–12, 5 mins)

Remind pupils of the ground rules, reinforcing that questions are welcomed in the lesson but if they have any questions they do not want to ask in front of the class or concerns about anything discussed in the lesson, they can put a question or a note to you in the question box.

Introduce the learning objective and outcomes, before writing the question, ‘What is a drug?’ on the board or flipchart. Allow time for pupils to discuss in pairs and feedback, before sharing the following, commonly accepted definition of ‘a drug’ from The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime:

A substance people take to change the way they feel, think or behave.

The term ‘drugs’ can, of course refer to all drugs:

- *all illegal drugs*
- *all legal drugs, including alcohol, tobacco and volatile substances (those giving off a gas which can be inhaled),*
- *all over-the-counter and prescription medicines.*

Baseline assessment activity (Slide 13, 10 mins)

Ask pupils to write the word ‘drug’ in the middle of a piece of paper and add some of the effects and risks associated with using a drug, on either side of the spider-gram – effects on one side and risks on the other. It might be helpful to phrase this as questions:

- *What might happen to the person using a drug? (Pupil responses might include: ‘get high’, feel happier, feel relaxed, have more energy, recover from illness)*
- *Are there any risks of using a drug? (Pupil responses might include: it could harm their body, it could become a habit or they get addicted, mental health problems, it might be illegal)*

As this is a baseline assessment, pupils should first work on their own, without further prompting. Circulate whilst pupils complete the activity and take them in to look at briefly during the lesson to gauge what pupils already know, understand and believe about drugs, as well as any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge.

Core activities


Effects and risks (Slide 14, 10 mins)


Remind pupils that all drugs affect (change) the brain or body in some way (some drugs relax the body, others make a person more awake or alert, some fight infection) but that all drug use comes with risk. Remind pupils of their previous learning in Year 3/4 about the misuse of medicines and explain that although medicines are a drug and if used incorrectly can be harmful, this lesson will mostly focus on other types of drugs. Some risks will depend not only on what the drug is, but other factors too. This activity will look at both some of the effects and risks of different drugs.

Ask pupils to work in groups of three or four. Each group will need a dice, the name of one drug from **Resource 1: Drugs cards** and a set of **Resource 2: Effects and risk cards**.

Note: *The drugs you choose to focus on should be informed by the types of drugs that pupils suggested in the baseline assessment activity, health data from your local area, and chosen from the list. Include at least one example of an illegal drug. The drugs we have focused on for this lesson are tobacco (cigarettes, shisha); alcohol; cannabis; vapes/e-cigarettes; caffeine, nitrous oxide; cocaine; MDMA (ecstasy) and speed (amphetamines).*

Ask pupils to take it in turns to roll the dice. If they roll a number 1 or 2, they pick an 'effect' card, and if they roll a number between 3 and 6, they pick a 'risk' card. They should read the card and, with the group, decide if it is a likely 'effect' or 'risk' of the drug they are focusing on. Those they think are a likely effect or risk, they should keep in a pile next to the drug; those they think are unlikely should form a discard pile.

 **Support:** Using **Resource 1: Drugs cards** and **Resource 2: Effects and risks cards**, ask pupils to play 'pick-up pairs' – they pick a drugs card and then an effect or risk card. Pupils say whether they think the effect or risk is true for the drug.

 **Challenge:** As they choose the cards, ask pupils to identify what might be an immediate effect or risk of using the drug and what is likely to be a longer-term effect (if the drug is used often, over a long period of time).

Fact checking (Slide 15, 10 mins)

Give the corresponding fact sheet (see **Resource 3: Drug fact sheets**) to the groups so they can check their answers.


Then bring the class back together and discuss some of their findings, such as whether different drugs have similar risks or if they were surprised by any of the risks of drugs they found out about.

Although not been included in each fact sheet, you may want to share the following learning points with the class:

- *drug use can lead to loss of money or a decrease in control over personal finance.*
- *used drugs can sometimes be left in the environment as litter*
- *to produce drugs, large areas of land might be cleared to grow the plants needed, which is contributing to deforestation and climate change.*

Pupils will learn more about this in secondary school.

 **Support:** Pupils may need adult support to check their answers using **Resource 3: Drugs fact sheets**.

 **Challenge:** Ask pupils, are there differences between immediate use and regular use over a longer period of time? How does the strength of the drug affect the effects and risks?

For example: Tobacco – one cigarette may make someone feel light-headed and cough. But, smoking many cigarettes over years can damage someone's lungs and other main organs, putting them at risk of illness and disease.

Drug risks (Slides 16-17, 15 mins)

Explain that drugs may not affect every person in the same way. Risk depends on the drug (what it is, how strong it is); the person (their age, their mood, their general health); where they are and the situation they are in, and that we can think of this as the 'risk' triangle:


- What is the drug? What do we (and don't we) know about the drug?
- Who is the person? What do we know about them?
- What is the situation they are in?


In pairs, ask pupils to read **Resource 4: Drugs and risk scenarios** and, using the information given, identify what is causing the risk, analyse how risky they think the scenario is (high, medium or low), and record their explanations on the sheet.

Take feedback from the class asking pupils to explain and justify their ideas. Are there any characters who are taking a risk with their own health or the health and wellbeing of those around them?

Suggestions might include:

- *Jim – Higher risk because he is drinking over the recommended amount.*
- *Jenny and Jay – Higher risk because cannabis is an illegal drug and by giving it to Jenny, Jay is supplying her with the drug, the strength of the drug is unknown, and they do not know how it will affect them.*
- *Indie – Medium or lower risk because although alcohol is not recommended for people aged 15, she is with her family and only drinking a very small amount.*
- *Dawn – Lower risk because vapes(e-cigarettes) are much less harmful than tobacco cigarettes when used by adults to help them stop smoking, as recommended by NHS and Public Health England. Vapes should not be used by children, as they can cause harm.*
- *Mo – Medium risk because although it is not an illegal drug, it sounds like it is affecting their balanced diet which is important to keep healthy and may affect their concentration and sleep.*
- *Alba – Higher risk because they cannot be sure what the drug is, how strong it is or how it will affect them, also it sounds like it is an illegal drug, which means they could face a criminal charge for having the drug.*
- *Shanise – Higher risk because she does not know what the drug is, inhaling anything from a canister is very dangerous and being near water is not a safe place when there is a higher likelihood of accidents from drug use.*

 **Support:** Ask pupils to work in pairs or as a group to complete an adapted version of the activity using **Resource 4a: Drugs and risk scenarios – support** with scaffolded responses. You may prefer to make these separate cards so there are fewer scenarios.

 **Challenge:** After completing **Resource 4: Drugs and risk scenarios**, give pupils **Resource 4b: Drugs and risk scenarios – challenge**. Ask them to discuss whether the change in the scenario would increase or decrease the risk and record their responses on the sheet.

Signposting support

Signposting support (Slide 18, 5 mins)

As a whole class, ask whether any of the characters from Resource 4 might need help and support; how and where they could get this and what might happen if they do.

Tell pupils where to find information, advice and support about any concerns they have now or in the future for themselves or people they know. They could get support by asking an adult for help, such as a parent/carer or teacher.

Provide some examples of organisations where people can get further advice such as: www.childline.co.uk – 0800 1111 (information and advice for young people about drugs, alcohol and smoking) and that if they need urgent help if someone is seriously ill, scared or unsafe they should call 999.

Adults can contact:

- www.nhs.co.uk – advice and support with drugs, alcohol and tobacco use
- [NHS Better Health Quit Smoking](#) – support to quit smoking
- www.drinkaware.co.uk – alcohol support services

Reflection and endpoint assessment

Endpoint assessment (Slide 19, 5 mins)

This can be completed following the lesson if necessary. Pupils return to their spider-gram baseline assessment and – in a different colour – add to or amend the information in light of their learning about the risks and effects of different drugs. This should be a general reflection of the different risks and effects of drug use and not specific to a particular drug.

For example: Drugs can be different strengths – if it is an illegal drug people cannot always tell how strong it is. People can react differently to different drugs. Most drugs, including medicines, can cause harm and damage the body if they are not used correctly. All drugs come with risks.

Extension activity

Drugs and risks (Slide 20)

Ask pupils to choose one of the drugs from **Resource 1: Drugs cards** (make sure that only the drugs discussed in the lesson are used) and discuss the following questions:

- What (if anything) would reduce the risk of using the drug? *For example – tobacco: cutting down on the number of cigarettes smoked, trying to quit, not using the drug in the first place*
- What would increase the risk of using the drug? *For example – tobacco: smoking every day for a long time, smoking around others/in the car*
- What could someone do if they were worried about the risk? *For example – tobacco: Get in touch with an organisation who can give advice and help such as [NHS Better Health Quit Smoking](#)*