

Healthy living Unit 3

Activity : Prescription Drugs

. Is there a difference between the heroin addict and the person dependent upon sleeping pills each and every night? What about the cocaine abuser and the individual hooked on painkillers after a back surgery? Sometimes the line between the use/abuse of 'illegal' substances and those that are prescribed is not always clear.

But what about those substances which can be purchased '*over-the-counter*' at the local pharmacy? These medications contain substances which affect the body and over time can have drastic effects on an individual.

Here are some examples of over-the-counter drugs and medicines:

- acne treatment products,
- allergy treatment products,
- antibiotics,
- anti-fungal products,
- antiseptic sprays, creams, and lozenges,
- cold remedies,
- cough suppressants,
- expectorants,
- head lice treatments,
- hemorrhoid treatments,
- insect bite treatments,
- laxatives,
- medicated prophylactics,
- pain relievers, such as aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, and
- dietary supplements.

Which ones in the list above would you think would be abused? Why? From your knowledge of the effects of substances on the body, you may have identified ones such as the pain relievers and cold remedies as examples.

Here is one example of how over-the-counter medications affected a teenager:

I am 17, last summer I went on a binge of taking commercial DXM and many many antihistamines for the purpose of feeling better. The drug was Gravol or dimenhydrinate I think. I took about 5 Gravol a day, (250mg) with an occasional binge of 25 or more and a one time attempted suicide, I took 200 pills in a month. It is now 5 months later and I'm

still not the same. I can't think, I am in a state of almost perpetual half-sleep. I was once considered gifted; now I can hardly remember an hour ago, no joke. Time seems to have no meaning at all; my brain doesn't record things anymore. I can no longer tell the difference between reality and dream/daydream unless I talk with someone. Am I just overly depressed?

This is a common theme that is affecting individuals of all ages in Canada. One of the more recent incidences of medication abuse was with the drug 'oxycontin'. The abuse of this medication has been cause for a call to change the law. Here is an article focusing upon the abuse of a medication:

[Teens overdose on student's ritalin](#) (PDF)

Many teens acknowledge that medications and over-the-counter substances are much easier to acquire than the illegal drugs. Do you agree with this statement? Why is this so? What is contributing to this growing problem?

Have a look at the following video clip which focuses upon the expressed thoughts and beliefs of teens regarding medication abuse.

[Webcast - Teens Abusing Medicine](#)

Do you feel that the video is accurate in its presentation? Is this an issue that is real for teens in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Activity

Here are a few questions to check your understanding and views of this subject.

Which is worse, abusing prescription or OTC (over-the-counter) drugs or using illegal drugs?

- . Are OTC drugs or prescription drugs safer than illegal drugs?
- . What are some reasons OTC and prescription drugs are abused?
- . Do students think it's normal to take drugs if they aren't being misused?
- . What about prescription and OTC drugs makes their misuse common?
- . What are some ways misusing drugs can affect a person's life?

(Both are dangerous.)

(When misused, they may be just as harmful as illegal drugs.)

(Those taking the drugs may feel that it helps them "escape," fit in better, perform better in school, or feel happier.)

(They are readily available from store shelves, from friends' or relatives' medicine cabinets, or from a child's own prescription.)

(Possibilities include becoming addicted; getting involved in criminal activity to continue getting drugs; becoming the victim of a crime while under the influence of drugs; suffering an overdose; or harming his or her body or mind.)