

Drugs, substances & alcohol

It's a choice - you can say 'no'

Lots of young people want to know about drugs and alcohol - this doesn't mean you have to take them or feel like you should just because people around you might be.

There are lots of reasons why people drink or take drugs, sometimes it is because they think it's going to be fun. Drugs can seriously affect your health and the way you see the world around you - what may seem fun at first can easily start leading to serious problems which you may find difficult to try and solve without additional support. It is easy to get into drug debts, start dropping out of education or training, have arguments at home, be exploited or get involved in an accident or criminal activity. There are many risks with any drink or drug use, so ask yourself, is it really worth it?

Prescription medicines and those that are available from a pharmacist can often be misused. Extreme care should be taken when using medicines as they can have serious side effects. Even too much paracetamol can have a life-long effect on your liver! Only use them for the purposes they have been prescribed. Children under 16 should not use aspirin.

Legal highs

“People use all sorts of substances, both legal and illegal to get ‘high’.”

Some people also think that ‘legal highs’ are safe - the term is misleading as many so-called ‘legal highs’ have been linked to serious incidents and in some cases, death.

Legal highs are substances that have similar effects to illegal drugs like cocaine or cannabis. They are sometimes called ‘club drugs’ or new psychoactive substances (NPS). Some of these drugs are legal to possess but this does not mean they are safe. Legal highs carry serious health risks.

It is possible to buy drugs online which claim to improve your sport performance, burn fat or give instant weight loss - these are untested, unsafe and often illegal.

Other legal substances are also harmful and addictive such as cigarettes, alcohol, glue, petrol and aerosols.

Are you drinking too much?

Most young people choose not to use drugs or alcohol and it is a myth that you need to drink or use drugs to enjoy yourself. It's a good idea to make sure that you have good factual information about these substances before you decide if you are going to use them.

“Health officials tell us that an alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest and best option.”

They say that it is best not to drink until at least the age of 15. If you are between 15 and 17 and are going to drink alcohol, it is safer to drink only very small amounts under adult supervision. Even small amounts of alcohol can lead to a number of health problems as well as becoming a victim of crime, being vulnerable to assault and doing something you may

regret later. Alcohol can affect different people in different ways, even what may seem like a very small amount can be harmful.

If you think you may be drinking too much or you or other people are worried about your drinking then seek information about cutting down.

If you feel under pressure to drink alcohol or are drinking because you have problems, try to address this by talking to an adult you trust or a sensible friend.

Key findings YEAH! Report 2014 - 2015

- Almost all participants had received information about drugs and alcohol, and smoking.
- However, few knew of where to go for information and support surrounding these issues.
- Participants had disengaged with traditional methods of learning, and wanted the opportunity to ask questions without judgement, and make informed choices for themselves.