

YOU Have the POWER!

Drug and alcohol use can be harmful for all age groups, but adolescents that are still developing are even more susceptible to the dangerous health effects and accidents that are often related to these substances. It is important to understand the dangers of using and abusing drugs and alcohol, and it is ultimately your choice and responsibility to protect yourself from these harmful substances. You have the **“Power”** to say no to drugs and alcohol.



Drugs

Drugs can be legal or illegal. **Legal drugs** are prescription or over-the-counter drugs, but when abused they are just as dangerous as illegal drugs. Drug use harms your body by changing your body’s normal functions, such as altering brain function, elevating or decreasing heart rate and blood pressure, etc. Some drugs put your body at risk for seizures, brain damage, nausea, hyperthermia (a rise in body temperature that can lead to dehydration which damages the kidneys, cardiovascular system, and can be fatal), and can damage every organ in your body. Drugs don’t just have long term, negative effects on the body, they can also be fatal at the time of usage. Overdoses of drugs and alcohol can be treated, but many are not caught soon enough and are fatal. This happens frequently when people are doing drugs together, and others are too doped up to realize what is happening to another person. Many adolescents have died under these kinds of circumstances.

Once addicted to any drug, it becomes nearly, if not completely, impossible to control the habit. Relationships with family and friends often become strained, and a person’s education becomes less important than their drug habit and addiction. Many drug addicts never finish high school. Not only do the adverse effects on your body pose a threat to your life, but there are also other dangers associated with drugs. People that use drugs and alcohol are at risk for accidents and assaults. Many homicides are related to drug use. You have the **“Power”** to avoid drugs!



Alcohol

Alcohol, like drugs, impairs the senses as well as judgment and reasoning skills. It becomes difficult to understand what is happening around you and to make safe and healthy choices in dangerous situations. People that drink alcohol and drive are more likely to have an accident because their motor skills are impaired. Unfortunately, these alcohol-related accidents often injure and kill innocent victims. When a person is impaired by alcohol, they are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as having sex or taking drugs. Alcohol affects the body by damaging the liver and brain, and too much alcohol in a person’s system can be fatal. You have the **“Power”** to avoid drinking alcohol!

YOUR CHOICE

It’s important to remember that it is a choice to start using drugs and alcohol. Therefore, it is also a conscious choice to avoid these dangerous substances. If you ever feel pressure to use drugs or alcohol, stand firm and remember you have the **“Power”** to say no.

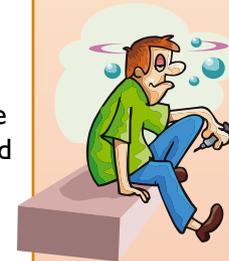
Discussion Questions

- Why do you think some adolescents use drugs and alcohol?
- How can peer pressure influence an adolescent’s use of drugs and alcohol?

Activities



- The article states numerous times that adolescents have the “Power” to avoid alcohol and drugs. What does this statement mean to you? Be specific and give examples.
- In groups, brainstorm some of the best strategies to avoid drugs and alcohol. What types of activities might help an adolescent avoid these substances? Share your ideas with other groups.
- Some adolescents have a hard time saying no or fear that saying no will make them unpopular. Write some refusal statements that would empower adolescents and give them the words and actions that will help them avoid drugs and alcohol. If possible, act out some of these scenarios.
- Create awareness posters that promote the importance of a drug and alcohol free campus.
- The article talks about addiction. What does addiction mean to you? Have you ever known any one that had a drug or alcohol addiction? Do further research to find out what types of interventions or programs are available for people with drug and alcohol addictions.



Home Connection With a parent, discuss whether you ever feel pressure to use alcohol or drugs from other adolescents. Share your strategies for dealing with this type of peer pressure if it ever occurs. How did your parents deal with peer pressure to use drugs or alcohol? What advice can they offer you? Share this advice with your classmates.