



WHAT DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT SUBSTANCE ABUSE?



READ ANY NEWSPAPER TODAY, OR WATCH THE TELEVISION NEWS, AND YOU CAN'T HELP BUT ENCOUNTER WORD OF THE EVER-DEEPENING PROBLEM OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES?

How much do you know about the chemical substances used—and abused—today? Match each brief description listed in column 1 with the name of the drug in column 2.

COLUMN 1

1. This powdery substance is smoked in pipes or cigarettes. It results in temporary feelings of confidence and exhilaration, and is highly addictive.
2. This powdery substance, when smoked, results in a light euphoric feeling, and a loss of coordination and judgment.
3. This liquid sedative results in a feeling of relaxation, and a blurring of coordination.
4. These chemicals induce deep relaxation or sleep. Used repeatedly, they can cause depression.
5. This powdery and highly addictive substance results in a short-term increase in energy, but later fades into depression.
6. When inhaled, these substances cause lightheadedness and diminish thinking abilities. Nausea can follow.
7. These substances often create vivid mental imagery and distortions of users' surroundings. "Flashbacks" can occur weeks, or even months, later.
8. This extremely addictive and dangerous substance produces intense mood swings and detachment from users' surroundings.
9. These substances result in increased energy and help users avoid sleep. Used repeatedly, they cause irritability and moderate loss in judgment.
10. This light stimulant results in a temporary increase in energy. Withdrawal from repeated use can cause lethargy and loss of judgment.

COLUMN 2

- a. Hallucinogens
- b. Heroin
- c. Alcohol
- d. Depressants
- e. Inhalants
- f. Cocaine
- g. Marijuana, Hash
- h. Caffeine
- i. Stimulants
- j. Crack



The answers
1 (f); 2 (g); 3 (c);
4 (d); 5 (i); 6 (e);
7 (a); 8 (b); 9 (i); 10 (h)

But what do you really know about substance abuse? To find out how drugs and alcohol can affect you and the people around you, answer "true" or "false" to each of these quiz statements:

1. Most people who abuse drugs and alcohol are unemployed. True or False?
2. About four in 10 automobile accidents involve alcohol abuse. True or False?
3. An individual's ability to drive will be affected for about 30 minutes after smoking marijuana. True or False?
4. Children of parents with alcohol and drug problems are more likely than their peers to abuse drugs and alcohol as they grow older. True or False?
5. With determination, a person addicted to drugs or alcohol can "kick the habit" on his or her own. True or False?
6. About 2 percent of North Americans are dependent on chemical substances. True or False?
7. Some people have a genetic ability to consume large amounts of alcohol without feeling its effects. True or False?
8. Smoking and alcohol use during pregnancy can result in low birth weight of babies and health problems early in the life of the child. True or False?

9. Infants born with fetal alcohol syndrome may suffer from cognitive, or intellectual, impairments. True or False?

10. An individual who has only a few drinks each week cannot be an alcoholic. True or False?

11. Children often use drugs for the first time in the home. True or False?

12. Counseling is the only effective treatment for people with substance abuse problems. True or False?

13. Under the United States' Americans With Disabilities Act, an employee who repeatedly works while in an intoxicated state is protected against dismissal. True or False?

14. A person who drinks while eating a meal will show fewer signs of intoxication than a person who drinks on an empty stomach. True or False?

15. Heavy alcohol use can lead to high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke and diabetes. True or False?

16. Drug abuse is very limited among people over the age of 30. True or False?

17. Binge drinking is a sure sign of alcoholism. True or False?

18. Young people who use steroids may find their long-term growth stunted. True or False?

19. Mixed drinks are less potent than "straight" drinks. True or False?

20. It's hard to spot substance abusers, since they generally use drugs and alcohol at home. True or False?

[Editor's Note: The answers follow. When publishing this article, you may wish to place answers on the following page.]

The Answers

1. False. Substance abuse is not bounded by the workplace, and is prevalent in every occupation and profession.

2. True.

3. False. Marijuana use can affect an individual's driving ability for five to seven hours—or more.

4. True. Some scientists suggest that a genetic predisposition toward substance abuse may run in families.

5. False. Most people with addictions require the help of a professional and the support of friends to "kick the habit."

6. False. More typically, estimates peg the figure in the range of 8 percent to 10 percent.

7. False.

8. True. Pregnant women should avoid tobacco and alcohol products during pregnancy.

9. True.

10. False. People who depend on alcohol, or whose ability to function in daily life is impaired by alcoholism, suffer from the disease. Some people could consume only a handful of drinks in a given week, and still suffer from alcoholism.

11. True. Many children experiment with glue and other inhalants found in

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU SPOT DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE

Drug and alcohol abuse can break up families, damage friendships, diminish productivity at work, and even lead to serious illness or death.

Everyone pays for these problems. By some accounts, every man, woman and child in the United States and Canada pays \$400 to \$500 a year in added product costs and health care premiums to underwrite lost productivity and treatment of substance abusers.

Do you know how to recognize the signs of substance abuse in friends and co-workers? What common-sense steps should you take if you suspect someone you know is abusing drugs or alcohol? Begin with these suggestions:

- ▶ Remember that help may begin with you. Many substance abusers don't believe they have a problem. Whatever they believe, most people with drug and alcohol problems will not seek out help entirely on their own. You could literally be the lifeline for someone in this position.

- ▶ Don't be afraid to be intolerant. In today's world, we're expected to be tolerant of a wide variety of behaviors. But when it comes to drugs and alcohol, intolerance may motivate a substance abuser to begin dealing with the problem.

- ▶ Notice drug paraphernalia around you. Notice the tell-tale signs: discarded bottles of alcohol in waste paper baskets, rolling paper, needles, chronic money shortages, pill bottles. These may be evidence of a substance abuse problem.

- ▶ Observe the physical signs of substance abuse. These might include wide fluctuations in weight, slurring of speech, dilated pupils, seemingly erratic changes in personality or physical coordination problems.

- ▶ Quietly tell someone. It could be a mutual friend, a family member or a supervisor. Simply mention that you've observed unusual, and perhaps troubling, behavior. Make no judgments and draw no conclusions. You're not a substance abuse counselor and should not attempt to solve the problem on your own. In fact, if you do become directly involved, you may unwittingly perpetuate the problem, say substance abuse professionals.

- ▶ Encourage coworkers to use employee assistance programs. Here's one possible exception to the don't-become-involved rule. If your company or industry offers an employee assistance program, don't hesitate to suggest that a coworker make an appointment.

- ▶ Don't risk emergencies. While you shouldn't attempt to counsel the individual yourself, don't—under any circumstances—let him drive, operate machinery or perform any other potentially dangerous task when he doesn't seem to be physically or emotionally up to par.

- ▶ Help prevent substance abuse. Get involved in a committee or task force at work, your church or synagogue, or in your community. Your volunteer efforts may help prevent people of all ages from abusing drugs or alcohol in the future.

- ▶ Set a positive personal example. By avoiding dependence on chemical substances—and warning others of their dangers—you become a role model for the people around you.



the home, as well as pills, alcohol and tobacco products.

12. False. A variety of treatments, ranging from group therapy to medications, are successfully used today.

13. False. An employer usually can't dismiss an employee simply for suffering from alcoholism, or for obtaining treatment. But the law will generally not pro-

tect an employee who drinks repeatedly, fails to perform on the job, and refuses treatment.

14. True.

15. True. Scientists are accumulating more evidence of the debilitating long-term effects of heavy alcohol use all the time.

16. False. Drug abuse is prevalent among every age group.

17. False. Binge drinking, particularly common among young people, is a serious abuse of alcohol. It's been associated with fatal accidents. Some, but not all, binge drinkers will develop long-term problems with alcohol.

18. True. Steroid use has also been linked to heart damage.

19. False. An ounce of alcohol is just as potent "straight" as it is mixed with another beverage.

20. False. Substance abusers may ingest drugs or alcohol in their vehicles, at work and even in public places. 🚫

About the Author

Richard Ensmen is a syndicated freelance writer based in Rochester, N.Y.