

One thing leads to another:

Things to remember about substance and alcohol abuse

You need to understand the processes that take place in your body when you take either alcohol or drugs:

- ❑ Alcohol and drugs change the way the brain functions.
- ❑ Under the influence of drugs or alcohol, you literally see the world differently and may not be able to tell what is real and what is not.
- ❑ Substance abuse is very harmful to the body and mind, but it is not easy to stop once you become addicted.
- ❑ Both alcohol and drugs can lead to a change in behaviour, and result in behaviours that are more risky and dangerous. When you have taken drugs or alcohol you don't think clearly. Poor decisions, like having sex without using a condom, are common when you're drunk.
- ❑ Behaviours like having unprotected sex can, in turn, lead to STIs, HIV and pregnancy.
- ❑ The consequences of making poor decisions when you are not yourself can make it more difficult to reach your goals.

You have only one mind and body for the rest of your life. Look after it.
Use it wisely.

Reach out for help

If you think that you need help, know of a friend who might need help, or simply want more information, reach out to an older person who you can trust.

Or call the South African National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence (SANCA) on **0861472622**



Myths and Facts

A Vhutshilo 2 resource: #1

Society, media and your friends can tell you things about alcohol and substance abuse that are simply not true. These are called 'myths' which are widely believed ideas that are actually false. This brochure aims to clear up the myths and give you fast facts about drugs and alcohol so that you have the correct information and can make smart decisions about your life.

Understanding what addiction is, helps us understand how drugs and alcohol can affect our lives. Addiction occurs when a person uses drugs or alcohol regularly and it becomes a habit even though it harms their body and brain. People who are addicted cannot say no to the drug or substance they are addicted to and they are unable to live without it. Addiction can affect school work, job and family—sometimes destroying it.

Test your ability to separate myths from facts as you read the statements in this brochure.

Alcohol is addictive but it is not a drug—This is a MYTH!

In fact, alcohol is a drug because it is a substance that changes the way your mind and body function. As with many other drugs, it can be addictive.

More young people use alcohol than dagga—This is TRUE!

Alcohol is the most abused substance among young people because it is easily accessible in most communities. Drug and alcohol abuse is a problem in all of our communities and is one of the main causes of destroying a family's and young person's dreams and goals.

Driving after using dagga is much safer than driving after drinking—This is a MYTH!

In fact, like alcohol, dagga affects coordination, slows reflexes and affects the way we see things around us. Any of these changes increase the chances of an accident while driving or crossing busy roads.

Alcohol becomes a problem only after years of use—This is a MYTH!

In fact, when someone has a drink, alcohol immediately clouds his or her judgment and slows reaction time. Having just one drink can cause a person to take foolish risks, limit their ability to protect themselves from abuse, or cause them to say yes to something that they do not want to do.

A young person can never be an alcoholic—This is a MYTH!

In fact, there are many young people who become addicted to alcohol in high school. These are young people who find it difficult to function in school without taking alcohol on a regular basis. Starting to drink when you are a teenager increases the risk for addiction.

Cigarette smoking can be addictive—This is TRUE!

It is very difficult to stop smoking once you have started. A lot of people have tried to stop smoking but have gone back to it because they are addicted to nicotine and cannot stay away from cigarettes. People who smoke even occasionally have a higher risk of heart disease or high blood pressure.

One mind, one body.

Many people addicted to other dangerous drugs reported that dagga was the first step to their addiction—This is TRUE!

Dagga is viewed as a 'gateway drug'; for example, people who are curious about drugs often start with dagga and then move on to something stronger.

Alcoholism is a disease—This is TRUE!

Alcoholism is an addictive disease and once a person becomes an alcoholic, they often need to undergo treatment. Many alcoholics can't just stop on their own without being in a treatment programme because when they stop suddenly, they develop symptoms that are hard to deal with because the body is so dependent on drugs or alcohol.

Drugs help people handle their problems—This is a MYTH!

In fact, drugs may help people forget about their problems for a short time or reduce pain caused by these problems. But the problems don't go away, they often get worse.

Glue and other substances that can be inhaled are basically harmless—This is a MYTH!

In fact, sniffing glue, cleaning fluids (thinners) or nail polish remover can be extremely dangerous and cause permanent damage to organs like the liver and the brain. In addition, they also catch on fire easily which makes them dangerous if used in front of an open fire or while smoking.

Look after it. Use it wisely.

A cup of coffee and a cold shower will sober someone who is drunk—This is a MYTH!

In fact, only time can make a drunk person sober. Alcohol is processed in the liver, which needs about one hour to process one drink and remove alcohol from the body. If a person had more than one drink, it will take longer.

Drugs only have a negative effect on your brain and not on your body—This is a MYTH!

In fact, drugs have a lot of health risks, in addition to causing some mental problems, drug addicts can also suffer heart disease and stroke, and where needles are used, there is a risk of HIV and other diseases like hepatitis.

Alcohol affects some people more than others—This is TRUE!

There are many factors that influence how alcohol affects the individual. These include body weight, amount of alcohol drunk, the other drugs in the body, the general health of the individual at the time and how recently the person has eaten.

Alcohol is a sexual stimulant—This is a MYTH!

In fact, while alcohol can increase a wish to have sex, it often weakens the ability to have sex; for example, it may cause men not to have an erection. Alcohol also increases risky behaviours (for example, having sex without a condom which may lead to HIV infection, other STIs, or pregnancy).

Tik and Nyaope are not addictive if you only take it occasionally—This is a MYTH!

In fact, tik is made from a substance called crystal meth (methamphetamine) and Nyaope contains heroin. Both of these substances are highly addictive even if you use it occasionally (for example once a week). Some people only have to use it once before they're hooked.

Dagga is not addictive—This is a MYTH!

A lot of people believe that dagga is not addictive, but it is; research has shown that it can be addictive for some people as they like feeling 'high' and they get addicted to the temporary high. Young people get addicted to dagga more easily than adults.