

### Medicines Are Legal Drugs

If you've ever been sick and had to take medicine, you already know about one kind of drugs. Medicines are legal drugs, meaning doctors can prescribe them for patients, stores can sell them, and people are allowed to buy them. However, it's not legal, or safe, for people to use these medicines any way they want or to buy them from people who are selling them illegally.

### Cigarettes, Alcohol, and Marijuana

Cigarettes and alcohol are two other kinds of legal drugs. In the UK, adults 18 and older can buy cigarettes and alcohol.

### Illegal Drugs

When people talk about a "drug problem," they usually mean abusing legal drugs or using illegal drugs, such as, ecstasy, cocaine, LSD, crystal meth, and heroin to get high.

### Why Are Illegal Drugs Dangerous?

Illegal drugs are not good for anyone, but they are particularly bad for a young person whose body is still growing. Illegal drugs can damage the brain, heart, and other important organs. Cocaine, for instance, can cause a heart attack - even in children.

While using drugs, people are also less able to do well in school, sports, and other activities. It is often harder to think clearly and make good decisions. People can do dangerous things that could hurt them - or other people - when they use drugs.

### Why Do People Use Illegal Drugs?

Sometimes children try drugs to fit in with a group of friends, or they might be curious or just bored. Someone may use illegal drugs for many reasons, but often because they help the person escape from reality for a while. A drug might - temporarily - make someone who is sad or upset feel better or forget about problems, but this escape lasts only until the drug wears off.

Drugs do not solve problems, and using drugs often causes other problems on top of the problems the person had in the first place. Somebody who uses drugs can become dependent on them, or addicted. This means that the person's body becomes so accustomed to having a drug that he or she can't function well without it.

Once someone is addicted, it is very hard to stop taking drugs. Stopping can cause withdrawal symptoms, such as vomiting (throwing up), sweating, and tremors (shaking). These sick feelings continue until the person's body gets adjusted to being drug free again.

### What Can I Do to Help?

If you think someone is using drugs, the best thing to do is to tell an adult that you trust. This could be a parent, other relative, teacher, coach, or school counsellor. The person might need professional help to stop using drugs. A grownup can help the person find the treatment needed to stop using drugs. Another way kids can help kids is by choosing not to try or use drugs, it is a good way for friends to stick together.

### Resources:

*Consequences Cards*

*The Brain-Body Connection*

*Drugs and Your Body*

*Drugs + Your Life – It isn't pretty*

*Drugs + Your body Poster*

### Talk to Frank

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

**National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens**

<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/>

**How drugs affect your body**

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/How-drugs-affect-your-body>