

**DID YOU KNOW?** The damaging effects of drug abuse often occur after prolonged use, but some may occur after just one use.

## Drugs and Your Body

Drugs not only affect your brain, they can seriously damage your body. Cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer, hepatitis, and lung disease can all be consequences of drug abuse. In addition, intravenous drug use can raise the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Some of these effects occur when drugs are used at high doses or after prolonged use; however, **impairment** may occur after just one use. Here's what some specific drugs can do to the body:

**PRESCRIPTION PAINKILLERS** such as oxycodone (OxyContin®) and hydrocodone (Vicodin®) slow breathing and can lead to life-threatening respiratory depression when not used under a doctor's supervision. There is also a high risk of **addiction** and overdose.

**INHALANTS** are breathable chemical vapors that are often found in common household products, and can produce a state of intoxication similar to alcohol. They are extremely toxic to the brain and other major organs and have been associated with a syndrome called "sudden sniffing death" which results from heart failure and/or suffocation or asphyxiation.

**METHAMPHETAMINE** or **METH** is a highly addictive central nervous system stimulant that causes rapid heart rate, irregular heartbeat, and increased blood pressure. It also damages kidneys, lungs, and liver, and can cause psychotic behavior, hallucinations, and stroke.

**ECSTASY** or **MDMA** is a drug that is chemically similar to stimulants and hallucinogens and can make a person feel energized and generate a sense of well-being. It can also interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature, leading to hyperthermia (increased body temperature) which can cause heart and kidney failure. MDMA can also impair memory and generate **depression** for several days after taking it.

**COCAINE** is a central nervous system stimulant that causes constricted blood vessels, as well as increased body temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure. It also increases the risk of heart attacks, respiratory failure, strokes, and seizures.

## Vocabulary

### ADDICTION:

a chronic, relapsing brain disease characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite harmful consequences.

### IMPAIRMENT:

diminished ability to think or function.

### DEPRESSION:

a condition of general emotional dejection and withdrawal.

### PARANOIA:

an irrational fear often involving a perceived or exaggerated threat.

### MOTOR FUNCTION:

action and coordination of one's limbs.

**MARIJUANA** is the most commonly used illegal drug in the United States. It affects judgment, memory, learning and motor skills, and can cause **paranoia**. It increases the risk of breathing problems.

**NICOTINE**, the addictive element of tobacco products, is one of the most heavily abused drugs in the United States. Tar in cigarettes increases the risk of lung cancer, emphysema, and bronchial disorders. Secondhand smoke can cause lung cancer in adults and increases the risk of respiratory illness in children.

**ALCOHOL** is a central nervous system depressant that slows reaction time and impairs complex mental and **motor functions**. It can cause long-term liver failure, cancer, and brain damage. Drinking during pregnancy may result in fetal alcohol syndrome and other abnormalities.

## True or False:

- The diminished ability to think or function as a result of drug use can only occur at high doses or after prolonged use.  
(A) True (B) False
- If a person drinks alcohol, his or her reaction time will be improved.  
(A) True (B) False
- Taking prescription painkillers without a doctor's supervision can result in a high risk of addiction and overdose.  
(A) True (B) False

