



SAY NO TO DRUGS

These days, the drug abuse is rife in almost all the countries, communities and societies. Enormous amounts of money are being spent internationally preventing drug use, treating addicts, and fighting drug-related crime. It does not affect only an individual but its ill effects lead to the family, society, community, country and the whole of the world ultimately. These days, drugs can be found everywhere, and it may seem like everyone's doing them. Many teens are tempted by the excitement or escape that drugs seem to offer. But learning the facts about drugs can help see the consequences and surely be kept at bay. Although drugs threaten many societies, their effects can also be combated successfully. Drug abuse causes multiple problems for countries and communities. The medical and psychological effects are very obvious.

Addicts cannot function as normal members of society. They neglect or abuse their families, and eventually require expensive treatment or hospitalization. The other major effect is on crime. Huge police resources are needed to fight smuggling and dealing Criminal gangs and mafia.

How, why and what about drugs :

The medical science has come a long way now. Thanks to medical and drug research, there are thousands of drugs that help people. Antibiotics and vaccines have revolutionized the treatment of infections. There are medicines to lower blood pressure, treat diabetes, and reduce the body's rejection of new organs. Medicines can cure, slow, or prevent disease, helping us to lead healthier and happier lives. But there are also lots of illegal, harmful drugs that people take to help them feel good or have a good time.

How do drugs work?

Drugs are chemicals or substances that change the way our bodies work. When you put them into your body (often by swallowing, inhaling, or injecting them), drugs find their way into your bloodstream and are transported to parts of your body, such as your brain. In the brain, drugs may either intensify or dull your senses, alter your sense of alertness, and sometimes decrease physical pain. A drug may be helpful or harmful. The effects of drugs can vary depending upon the kind of drug taken, how much is taken, how often it is used, how quickly it gets to the brain, and what other drugs, food, or substances are taken at the same time. Effects of different drugs may vary from individual to individual i.e. based on the differences in body size, shape, and chemistry of a person. Although substances can feel good at first, they can ultimately do a lot of harm to the body and brain. Drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, taking illegal drugs, and sniffing glue can all cause serious damage to the human body. Some drugs severely impair a person's ability to make healthy choices and decisions. Teens who drink, for example, are more likely to get involved in dangerous situations, such as driving under the influence or having unprotected sex.

Why do people use drugs? Just as there are many kinds of drugs available, there are as many reasons for trying drugs or starting to use drugs regularly. Pleasure is a powerful force. People use drugs because they like the way drugs make them feel. If you do something pleasurable, the brain is wired in such a way that you want to do it again. All the addicting drugs can activate and affect the brain's pleasure mechanism. Some are simply curious and figure 'one try' won't hurt. There could be family and psychological reasons also as a few use drugs to gain attention from their parents. Many teens use drugs because they are depressed or think drugs will help them escape their problems. The truth is, drugs don't solve problems. Drugs simply hide feelings and problems. When a drug wears off, the feelings and problems remain - or become worse. Drugs can ruin every aspect of a person's life.

What is addiction? Addiction is a disease that affects our brain and behaviour. You have control over your choice whether to start or not using drugs, but once you start, the pleasurable effect of drugs makes you want to keep using them. Over the period of time, your brain actually changes in certain ways so that a powerful urge to use drugs controls our behaviour. This is known as addiction to drugs. Someone who is addicted uses drugs without thinking or caring about the consequences.

How do I know if I have a problem? You have a problem if you keep craving and using a drug even if it's causing trouble for you. The trouble may be with your health, with money, with work or school, or with your relationships with family or friends. Your friends and family may be aware you're having a problem before you realize it, because they see changes in your behaviour.

Are prescription drugs safe? When prescription drugs are taken the right way as prescribed by the doctor, they are safe and there is little or no chance of any kind of addiction. However, prescription drugs can be dangerous if they are abused (for example, taking too much or taking them when they're not needed). Some of the most commonly abused prescription drugs are painkillers and anti-anxiety drugs.

Possible Signs of Drug Abuse: Though different kinds of drugs have different symptoms but here we try to generalize the possible signs of drug abuse for our first hand information :

- Loss of concentration & trouble paying attention
- Being more forgetful than usual
- Giving up routine activities such as sports, homework, occupation or hobbies
- Long periods spent alone
- Loss of appetite
- Lying and stealing
- Mood swings & change in behaviour & attitude
- Anger outbursts & acting irresponsibly
- Loss of sleep or trouble in sleeping
- Paranoia; a feeling that people are 'out to get you'.
- Feeling exhausted, depressed, hopeless, or suicidal
- Lethargy, drowsiness
- Constricted pupils fail to respond to light
- Scars (tracks) on inner arms or other parts of body, from needle injections
- Slurred speech
- And many other symptoms are possible varying from individual to individual and drug to drug.

Which drugs can cause addiction?

People can become addicted to both illegal drugs and drugs that doctors prescribe. Commonly abused illegal drugs include marijuana (pot), hallucinogens (PCP, LSD), methamphetamine (speed, crank, crystal, meth), cocaine and crack, and heroin. People can also become addicted to things they may not think of as drugs, such as alcohol and tobacco. Everybody including the drug addicts are very well aware of the life threatening consequences of drug addiction.

Appended below are some of the most commonly abused drugs :

Alcohol : commonly known as Booze or drink:

Effects : Acts as central nervous system depressant, so reduces anxiety, concentration is impaired, reactions slowed : Long-term effects include liver disease (cirrhosis, liver cancer, hepatitis, heart disease, inflammation of stomach. Alcoholics have above average chance of developing dementia.

Cocaine : Street names are Coke, crack, ice, snow (Crack is a blend of cocaine, baking powder and water) :

Effects : Increased blood pressure, heart rate, breathing and body temperature, feelings of euphoria, illusions of increased sensory awareness and mental and physical strength, decrease in hunger, pain and need for sleep. : Regular use can cause anxiety, insomnia, weight loss, increased paranoia and psychosis. Crack is highly addictive and has more intense effects than cocaine. Increased risk of abnormal heart rhythms, high blood pressure, stroke and death. Long-term consequences include mental deterioration, personality changes, paranoia or violent behavior.

Heroin : also known as Junk, smack :

Effects : Induces euphoria, relieves pain and often induces sleep : Highly addictive. Overdose can result in death; serum hepatitis is common; skin abscesses, inflammation of the veins; constipation, respiratory depression.

Lysergic acid diethylamide : common name is LSD or acid :

Effects : Hallucinations, vision alters, rise in temperature and heartbeat, flashbacks. Long-term use causes anxiety and depression; impaired memory and attention span; difficulty with abstract thinking.



Marijuana: Street names are Grass, pot, weed, dope:

Effects : Increase in heartbeat, heightens senses, feelings of euphoria and relaxation :

Reduces the ability to perform tasks requiring concentration, slows reactions and impairs coordination.

MDMA : other names are Ecstasy or E :

Effects : Mental relaxation, increased sensitivity to stimuli, sometimes hallucinations High doses have amphetamine-like effects. Can produce severe or fatal reactions, sometimes after only one dose.

Methadone :

Effects : Induces sleep and feeling of relaxation : Addictive, overdose can result in death.

Nicotine :

Effects : Stimulates the nervous system; increases concentration, relieves tension and fatigue; increases heart rate and blood pressure. : Taken regularly can cause increase in fatty acids in bloodstream, increases risk of heart disease and circulatory problems, can also increase risk of peptic ulcers. Increased risk of lung, throat and mouth cancers from tobacco smoke.

Phencyclidine : Street names are PCP, Angel Dust :

Effects : Feeling of euphoria, floating sensation; numbness; change in user's perception of the body; visual disturbances : Can produce violent behavior against the user or others; schizophrenic-like psychosis which can last for days or weeks.

Besides, there are other drugs also which are being abused by the addicts. These include Amphetamines : commonly known as Uppers, speed, bennies, Barbiturates (Nembutal, Seconal, Amytal) : known as Barbs, reds, downers: Benzodiazepines : generally known as Tranquilizers : Mescaline with street names Peyote, cactus buttons; Nitrites are known as Poppers and some Solvents. These drugs are as dangerous as the others detailed above. These could cause paranoia, convulsions. toxic effects, insomnia, depression, cardiac problems, kidney and liver damage. And could be fatal.

According to National Drug Treatment Monitoring System in England, 2001/02 and 2002/03', the number of drug users reported as being in treatment with drug misuse agencies and GPs was around 140,900. However, this is only an estimate as real picture can never be produced because a majority of drug addicts are not under any treatment but recent Home Office research conducted by York University indicated that up to 500,000 drug addicts are possible in Britain. Figures also show that more than 640,000 people used cocaine last year, triple the number in 1997.

What Every Parent Needs to Know about drug addiction :

Prevention Starts With Parents: There are no guarantees that your child will not choose to use drugs, but as a parent, you can influence that decision by:

- not using drugs yourself
- providing guidance and clear rules about not using drugs
- spending time with your child.

Ask Yourself a Few Questions : Much of what children learn about drugs comes from parents. Take a few minutes to answer the following questions to yourself, do a bit of introspection and give a thought to, where could the 'yes' to the following may lead your kids :

- Do you usually offer alcoholic drinks to friends and family when they come to your home?
- Do you take sleeping pills to fall asleep?
- Do you use alcohol or any other drug in a way that you would not want your child to?
- Do you smoke cigarettes?
- Are you proud about how much you can drink?
- Do you go to parties that involve a lot of drinking?
- Do you drink and drive or ride with drivers who have been drinking?
- Do you let minors drink alcohol in your home?
- Do you take drugs?

If the answer to most of the above questions is YES by a parent, be careful if you have young children at home. No excuses please. Take care of yourself so that you are better equipped to take care of your teens.

Talk with your child honestly. Don't wait to have "the drug talk" with your child. Make discussions about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs part of your daily conversation. Know the facts about how drugs can harm your child. Clear up any wrong information, such as "everybody drinks" or "marijuana won't hurt you." Be clear about family rules for use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Encourage your child to share questions and concerns about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Do not do all the talking or give long lectures. Look for all the good things in your child and then tell your child how proud you are. If you need to correct your child, criticize the action, not your child. Praise your child's efforts as well as successes. Look at your own habits and thoughts about tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. Your actions speak louder than words. Talk with your child about your expectation that he will say "no" to drugs. Spell out what will happen if he breaks these rules. (For example, "My parents said I can't use the car if I drink.") Be prepared to follow through, if necessary. Look for ways to get your child involved in athletics, hobbies, school clubs, and other activities that reduce boredom and excess free time. Encourage positive friendships and interests. Look for activities that you and your child can do together.

Say No To Drugs :

Drug addiction is a treatable disorder. Through treatment that is tailored to individual needs, patients can learn to control their condition and live normal, productive lives. There are various treatments which vary from individual to individual depending upon the category of drugs addiction, physical and mental condition of the abuser etc Like people with diabetes or heart disease, people in treatment for drug addiction learn behavioural changes and often take medications as part of their treatment regimen. Therapies can include counselling, psychotherapy, support groups, or family therapy. Treatment medications offer help in suppressing the withdrawal syndrome and drug craving and in blocking the effects of drugs.

The family, friends and society can help considerably towards the de-addiction of a person besides his or her will power. Nothing is impossible. Prevention is always better than cure. First try not to be addicted and if due to any avoidable or unavoidable reasons, addiction is seen, immediate steps must be taken by all the concerned including the addict. There are a number of special help lines, counselling services and clinics to help the drug addicts. The society as a whole must share the responsibility towards the drug addicts. Save lives, save families, save societies, save nations and save this beautiful world.....SAY NO TO DRUGS.

Dr. A. Kumar

Disclaimer : This article has been prepared for the general information of the readers so that they could learn more about the disease. The readers are advised not to take any medication of their own based on the information provided in this article. They should consult their doctor / PG / hospital for any kind of medication they need and don't use the medication in any way mentioned in this article which is solely for the purpose of general information and education and also not for any commercial use. The writer as well as the publishers wont own any responsibility / damages of any kind whatsoever, towards any reader, individual or organization.



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