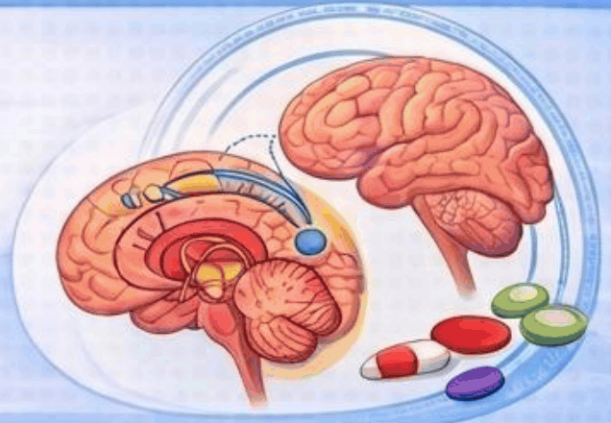


## UNDERSTANDING DRUG ADDICTION

### 1 What is Drug Addiction?

Drug addiction is a chronic, relapsing brain disorder characterized by:

- Compulsive drug seeking and use
- Loss of control
- Continued use despite harmful consequences



### 2 Why is Quitting So Hard?

Addiction is difficult to overcome because drugs physically change the brain:

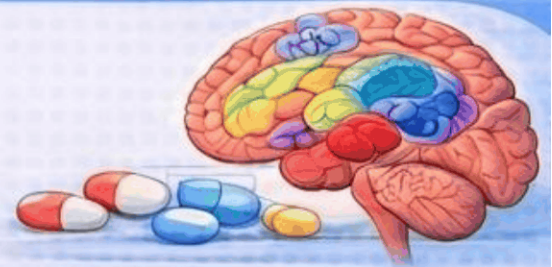
- **Repeated use** rewires brain circuits (reward, memory, control)
- Decision-making and self-control impaired
- Cravings may persist long after stopping



### 3 How Addiction Develops

Addiction develops over time:

- Drugs trigger a large dopamine surge → intense pleasure
- The brain adapts → reduced natural dopamine production
- Tolerance develops → higher doses are needed
- Over time, drugs are used not to feel good, but to feel normal"



### 4 Key Message

- Addiction is not a moral failure.
- It is a treatable medical condition.
- Recovery is possible with treatment and support
- Healing takes time and professional help



# What Can Happen If Addiction Is Not Treated?



## 1 What is drug addiction?

Addiction is not a lack of willpower. It is a chronic, progressive, and relapsing brain disease. Without treatment, addiction may:

- alter brain structure and function
- impair judgment, self-control, and emotional regulation
- make it increasingly difficult to stop without help



## 2 Damage to Body and Mental Health

Long-term addiction significantly increases the risk of:

- Cardiovascular disease, infections, organ damage
- Anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders
- Overdose and poisoning

These harms often do not resolve without treatment and may worsen over time.



## 3 Impact on Life, Family, and Society

Untreated addiction is associated with:

- Strained family relationships
- Disrupted education and employment
- Financial instability and legal problems



## 4 The Ultimate Risk: Loss of Life

Without intervention, addiction can progress and may ultimately result in:

**Overdose, severe illness, or death.**



## Takeaways

- Addiction is a disease — treatable, but serious
- The earlier the treatment, the better the outcomes

# TIPS FOR SAYING NO TO DRUGS

**NO**



## SAY "NO, THANK YOU." DIRECTLY

This is the simplest and most straightforward method. It's usually very effective.

## WALK AWAY

One of the most effective ways is to simply walk away. You don't need to argue, explain, or justify. Just say "No" and leave.



## IGNORE (PRETEND YOU DIDN'T HEAR)

Avoid direct confrontation. You can either ignore the person or talk to someone else, making the situation awkward for the one offering drugs.



## AVOID RISKY SITUATIONS

Before going to a gathering, evaluate the setting and avoid places where you suspect people might be using drugs..



## GIVE A REASON – REAL OR MADE UP

Prepare a good excuse. This can help you get out of the situation quickly and assertively without conflict.

Examples:

- "My mom just called me. Sorry, I have to go. Family stuff."
- "I have a dentist appointment later, so I can't stay."
- "I didn't bring my phone this week. If I don't get home soon, my family will worry. I really can't go out today."



## CHANGE THE TOPIC

Offer an alternative activity to shift the focus away from drugs. The refusal becomes more natural.

- "No, we're going to play basketball!"
- "We were planning to play video games this afternoon, let's go!"



## USE HUMOR TO DEFLECT

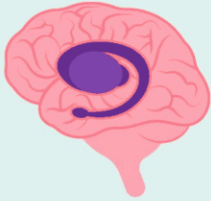
When you feel awkward or under pressure, humor can be a clever way to say no.

- "No thanks! My brain's already full, one more hit and I might start speaking alien!"
- "Nope, I'm good. That stuff messed me up last time — I'm still recovering!"





# How drugs affect the brain



## 1

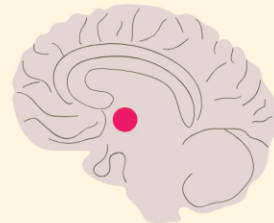
### BASAL GANGLIA

- This area is responsible for driving us to perform healthy behaviors, such as eating or communicating with friends.
- When drugs enter this zone, they cause a feeling of extreme happiness.
- Long-term drug use will cause the basal ganglia to become accustomed to the presence of drugs, resulting in the person being unable to derive pleasure from other activities and only being able to be satisfied by continuing to take drugs.

## 2

### AMYGDALA

- The amygdala is responsible for controlling stress and anxiety.
- When a person takes drugs, this area becomes extremely sensitive.
- Once drug dependence has formed, sudden drug withdrawal can cause severe discomfort in the amygdala, leading people to use drugs again in order to escape the pain.



## 3

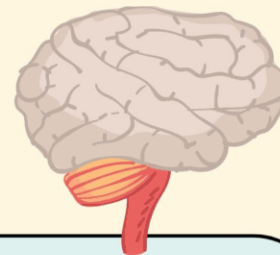
### PREFRONTAL CORTEX

- The prefrontal cortex is responsible for decision-making, behavioral control, and rational judgment.
- Drug abuse can weaken the function of this area, making it difficult for people to make correct judgments and even resist dangerous impulses.

## 4

### BRAIN STEM

- The brain stem is responsible for controlling heartbeat and breathing.
- Drugs such as opioids can severely suppress breathing, causing it to slow or even stop. This is an overdose, which can be fatal in severe cases.



## 5

### OTHER HAZARDS

- Memory loss – Drugs affect the hippocampus, causing short-term memory loss and decreased learning ability.
- Mental illness – Long-term drug use may lead to anxiety, depression, schizophrenia or paranoia.



# How drugs affect your appearance



Rapidly aging face



Scan the QR code to view real photos



Meth Mouth



Acne outbreaks



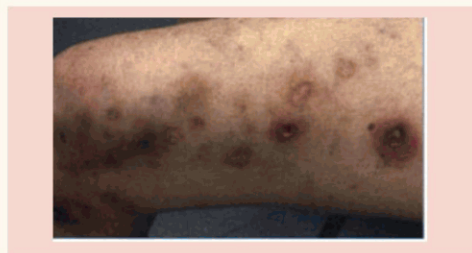
Cocaine Nose



Mouth ulcers



Vascular collapse



Skin Infections



Spinal deformity



Acne

## HOW DRUGS HARM YOUR BODY



### 1 Bones

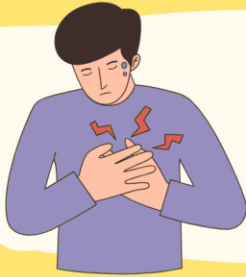
- Heroin use and intravenous drug misuse can also lead to infections and diseases in muscles and tendons.
- Steroids can cause the brain to signal the bones to stop growing. Teens who abuse steroids may never reach their full adult height.

### 2 Physique

- Meth causes a decrease in appetite, causing you to look thin and skeletal.
- Steroids can cause youth to stop growing - they may never reach their full adult height.



### 3 Cardiovascular System



- Stimulant drugs (such as cocaine and methamphetamine) can accelerate heart rate, leading to arrhythmia and heart attacks.
- Long-term use can cause high blood pressure, increasing the risk of stroke and heart disease.
- Injecting drugs intravenously (such as heroin) can easily cause phlebitis, vascular blockage, and even lead to limb necrosis.

### 4 Respiratory system

- Inhaled drugs (such as marijuana, cocaine, and heroin) can cause chronic bronchitis, emphysema, pulmonary fibrosis, and other diseases.
- Opioid drugs (such as heroin) suppress the respiratory center, leading to respiratory failure and death by asphyxiation.
- Overdose can be fatal: opioid drugs (such as heroin and fentanyl) can cause respiratory depression, and excessive use may result in death from asphyxiation.



### 5 Digestive system

- Drugs can impair the liver's detoxification function, leading to cirrhosis and liver failure.
- Sharing needles can spread diseases such as hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS.
- Drugs can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach ulcers, and other gastrointestinal problems.
- Opioid drugs can cause severe constipation; long-term abuse may lead to intestinal necrosis.

### 6 Immune system

- Drugs suppress the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS.
- Sharing syringes can lead to the transmission of HIV and hepatitis C.



## HOW DRUGS CAN AFFECT YOUR LIFE

### ADDICTION CAN IMPACT MANY ASPECTS OF A PERSON'S LIFE



#### Life Falling Apart

- You may constantly think about how to get drugs and chase after a high
- You can no longer enjoy things that once brought you happiness



#### Family Breakdown

- Drug use can bring about conflict, violence, and emotional instability
- Severely damages interpersonal relationships
- Leads to family disruption and breakdown



#### Losing Your Job

- Unable to concentrate at work
- Affects work performance
- May be fired



#### Financial Problems

- Drugs are expensive and may leave you unable to pay for essentials
- Losing your job causes even more financial strain



#### Losing Friends

- Drug abuse often leads to conflict, violence, and mistrust
- Breaks down relationships, ultimately causing friends to drift away



#### Worsening Health

- Long-term drug use harms the liver, kidneys, and other organs
- Sharing needles greatly increases the risk of hepatitis C, HIV, and other bloodborne diseases



#### Changes in Appearance

- Drugs may cause skin inflammation, swelling, blood vessel narrowing, rashes, and skin damage or scarring
- Injecting drugs can leave needle marks and cause vein collapse



#### Poor Academic Performance

- Drugs impair learning ability, concentration, and productivity
- Leads to declining grades

## Drug Misuse Harms Others

### 1 Public Safety Risks

Drug use impairs judgment, reaction time, and coordination, increasing the risk of harm:

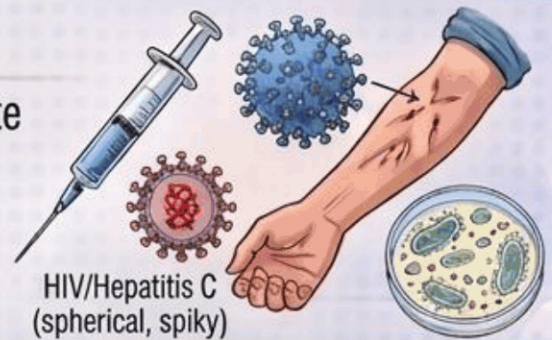
- Higher risk of traffic accidents
- Increased likelihood of violence and conflicts
- Impaired ability to drive or operate machinery



### 2 Infectious Diseases

Injection drug use and unsafe practices contribute to the spread of serious infections:

- HIV
- Hepatitis C
- Bacterial infections (e.g., sepsis, endocarditis)



### 3 Secondhand Exposure

Drug smoke and environmental exposure can harm others, especially children:

- Exposure to toxic chemicals in secondhand smoke
- Children and infants are more vulnerable
- Long-term exposure may affect development and respiratory



### 4 Harm to Infants

Drug use during pregnancy can have serious consequences:

- Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)
- Premature birth and low birth weight
- Developmental and long-term health issues



**Drug misuse is not only a personal issue –  
it causes real harm to families, communities, and society.**



# Commonly Used Drugs: Fentanyl



## 1 What is Fentanyl

- A highly potent synthetic opioid
- Approximately 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin
- Legitimate medical use for severe pain management (e.g. cancer-related pain)

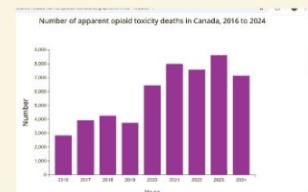
## 2 Why Is It So Dangerous?

- Very small amounts of fentanyl, sometimes comparable in size to a few grains of salt, can be fatal
- Often mixed into other drugs unknowingly
- Highly addictive

## 3 Reality Check

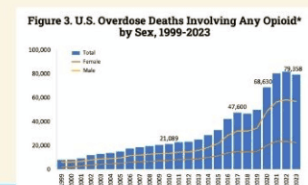
### Canada (latest available data)

- Opioid overdose deaths (2024): ~7,146
- ~74% involve fentanyl



### United States (latest available data)

- Opioid overdose deaths (2023): ~72,776
- ~70% involve fentanyl



## 4 Emergency Response

- Naloxone can rapidly reverse opioid overdoses
  - Call emergency services immediately and follow dispatcher instructions
- (This material is for public education purposes only and does not replace medical or emergency advice.)

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Health Canada



# Commonly Used Drugs: Heroin



## 1 What is Heroin

- Highly addictive drug, can be fatal
- rapidly acting opioid
- made from morphine, a natural substance taken from opium poppy plants
- Before the advent of fentanyl, heroin was the leading cause of drug overdose deaths.

## 2 Why Is It So Dangerous?

- Highly addictive
- Initial surge of “rush,” followed by a twilight state of sleep and wakefulness
- Long-term use can cause serious damage to various aspects of the body, including the brain, internal organs, bones, and skin.
- High risk of overdose or death

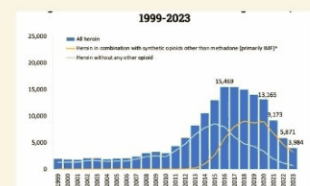
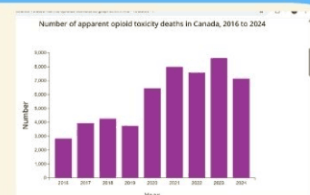
## 3 Reality Check

### Canada (latest available data)

- Opioid overdose deaths (2024): ~7,146
- Heroin was not distinguished from other opioids.

### United States

- Heroin overdose deaths peaked in 2016 with 15,469 deaths.
- declined year by year due to the fentanyl epidemic



## 4 Emergency Response

- Naloxone can rapidly reverse opioid overdoses
  - Call emergency services immediately and follow dispatcher instructions
- (This material is for public education purposes only and does not replace medical or emergency advice.)

# Commonly Used Drugs: Cocaine



## 1 What is Cocaine

- White, crystalline powder derived from coca leaves
- A powerful stimulant
- Highly addictive

## 2 Health Effects

- Can cause physical changes in the brain that may affect a person's ability to function in daily life, work, or school
- Physical effects include lung and breathing problems, nasal damage, heart problems, and stomach issues
- Chronic snorting can severely damage the nasal cavity

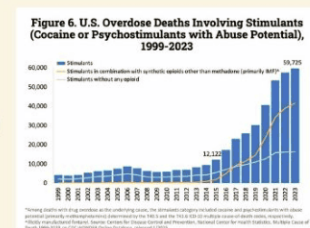
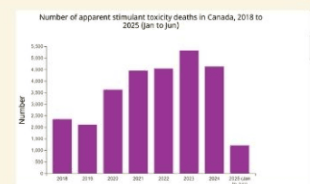
## 3 Reality Check

### Canada (latest available data)

- Stimulant-related overdose deaths (2024): 4,637
- Includes cocaine and other stimulants

### United States

- Overdose deaths rose from 12,122 in 2015 to 59,725 in 2023 (cocaine or psychostimulants with abuse potential)



## 4 Overdose Effects

- Overdose can be fatal
- Strokes and seizures
- Irregular heart rhythm or heart attack

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Health Canada

# Commonly Used Drugs: Methamphetamine

## 1 What is Methamphetamine?

- A powerful synthetic stimulant
- Highly addictive
- Crystal meth often looks like glass fragments

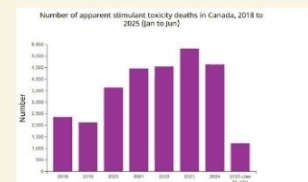
## 2 Health Effects

- Brain damage (some effects may be permanent)
- Extreme weight loss
- Severe tooth decay (“meth mouth”)
- Severe itching and skin sores from scratching

## 3 Reality Check

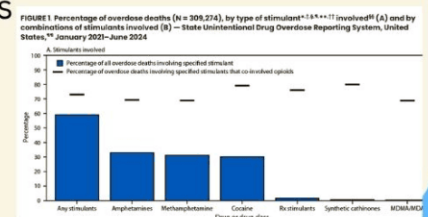
### Canada (latest available data)

- Stimulant-related overdose deaths (2024): 4,637
- Includes methamphetamine and other psychostimulants



### United States

- Among 309,274 overdose deaths in 49 states and the District of Columbia (Jan 2021–Jun 2024), 31.2% involved methamphetamine



## 4 Overdose Effects

- Overdose can be fatal
- Strokes
- Heart attack
- Multiple organ failure

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Health Canada



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## Commonly Used Drugs: Bath Salts



### 1 What is BathSalt?

- “Bath salts” belong to the synthetic cathinone class of drugs.
- Central nervous system stimulants
- Designed to mimic the effects of cocaine, methamphetamine, and MDMA

### 2 Long Term Mental effects

- anxiety
- confusion
- psychosis
- depression
- frequent mood changes

### 3 Long Term Physical Effects

- insomnia
- liver and heart damage
- kidney damage or failure
- muscle injury or breakdown (rhabdomyolysis)
- skin rashes or serious skin infections

### 4 Overdose Effects

- Overdose may be fatal
- Multiple organ failure

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Health Canada





## Commonly Used Drugs: Cannabis

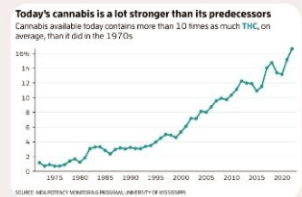
### What is Cannabis?



- Cannabis (marijuana) contains over 125 cannabinoids
- Main psychoactive component: THC
- THC alters mood, thinking, and perception, and may cause dependence and addiction

### Risk is increasing

- Average THC in seized cannabis: 4% (1995) → ~16% (2022)
- Higher potency, higher health and dependence risks



### Short-Term Effects

- Impaired attention, memory, and judgment
- Anxiety, paranoia, acute psychotic-like symptoms
- Reduced coordination, increasing crash risk
- Increased heart rate, dizziness, red eyes

### Long-Term Harms

- Early and frequent use linked to cognitive impairments
- Long-term users have higher probability of cannabis use disorder
- Associations observed with anxiety and depression

### Youth at Highest Risk

- The adolescent brain continues developing into early adulthood
- THC exposure may interfere with normal brain development
- Early initiation increases risk for long-term effects



### Takeaways

- Cannabis is not harmless.
- Youth face the greatest and most lasting risks.