

serotonin — A neurotransmitter found in the brain that is responsible for regulating mood, sleeping and eating habits.

stimulant — A powerful and addictive drug that stimulates the central nervous system. The drug can come from natural and synthetic sources.

synapse — The space between neurons in which neurotransmitters are released.

tolerance — A process involving the body's lessening response to a drug, making it necessary for users to take higher doses of the drug to achieve the same effects once reached with lower doses.

Discussion Topics

- In peer discussion groups, have students share strategies for keeping themselves drug-free. Discuss the places where a person can find support if they are experiencing problems.
- Blackouts and amnesia from drug and alcohol use make sexual assaults a very real possibility, with the victim either unaware of what happened, or too ashamed to admit it. Brainstorm ways that students can protect themselves and their friends when they are out at a club. (Don't leave drinks unattended; buy unopened drinks and open them yourself; call 911 if you find a friend acting intoxicated.)

Follow-up Activities

- Direct students to the Internet sites www.monitoringthefuture.org, www.drugabusestatistics.samhsa.gov, and www.DAWNinfo.net. Have them compare trends in ecstasy use for specific age groups over the course of the last two decades and create a poster summarizing what they discover. They will find that substance abuse, including the use of MDMA, among adolescents and young adults is declining. Is this surprising? What are some reasons that could account for this?
- Have students research a topic like drug use at raves, and debate the controversy surrounding the club scene. Have one side include the perception that all "ravers" are drug users, while another group can argue that teens are able to make healthy choices and still enjoy the club scene.
- Have each student write a persuasive essay or letter geared to a hypothetical younger friend or sibling who is experiencing low self-esteem and parental conflicts and is considering drug use. Direct them to explain some the immediate consequences of drug abuse while encouraging the reader to celebrate his/her individuality. Students can also recommend ways to resist negative influences and suggest healthy alternatives to drugs.

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- Show students examples of public service announcements and other anti-drug ads. Ask them to critique the elements of each ad and create their own for distribution around the school or neighborhood. Approve students' drafts for appropriateness before they complete their final products.

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- **www.projectghb.org**
Project GHB helps educate the public about GHB, ecstasy, ketamine, and other drugs.
- **www.clubdrugs.org**
A NIDA companion Web site designed to educate the public on the dangers of club drugs.
- **www.dancesafe.org/slideshow/**
This site includes a slide show about MDMA neurotoxicity, including up-to-date research and current theories.

For help with a drug problem, call 1-800-662-HELP or go to:
www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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DRUG Education for Teens™

CLUB DRUGS

Grades 7 & up

Successful prevention education must empower teens to develop their own decision-making skills and assume responsibility for making choices that keep them healthy and safe. It is important to convey that most youths do not use drugs. In fact, smoking, drinking and other drug use has fallen among teens in recent years.

Nonetheless, drug related problems continue to devastate families and communities. Prepared with credible information, students develop an understanding of the risks involved in the use of any drug and learn that you don't have to be an addict for drugs to change your life.

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Background

The term “club drugs” refers to a number of illegal mind-altering substances often taken at clubs, parties, bars, and all-night dance parties called “raves.” Some users, believing that these chemicals are not addictive or harmful, take them for energy to keep on dancing or partying. The truth is that many “club drugs” can produce profound damage to the brain and other organs, while others can be lethal when combined with alcohol or other drugs.

Dancing nonstop under the influence of MDMA in a crowded, hot setting often leads to severe rises in body temperature, referred to as hyperthermia. Dehydration from fluid loss combined with increased body temperature can lead to unconsciousness. Heart or kidney failure is possible in particularly susceptible people.

Users of club drugs often take more than one drug at a time. People under the influence of these drugs take inordinate risks and put themselves in jeopardy of many dire consequences, including contracting STD’s, becoming addicted and going to jail.

MDMA, also known as ecstasy, was developed in the early 1900s as an appetite suppressant and was also used medically by psychiatrists. Ecstasy is a so-called ‘designer drug.’ Designer drugs are synthetic and were created by tinkering with the molecular structure of illegal drugs to create new chemicals that would produce effects similar to those of illegal drugs without being illegal. It is one of many mood-altering offshoots of methamphetamine. As deaths and overdoses were reported, the Drug Enforcement Agency banned the sale of the drug in 1985.

In addition to the dangers associated with MDMA itself, users are also at risk of being given a substitute drug. Made in clandestine labs, ecstasy tablets are notoriously impure, often containing chemicals other than MDMA. Impure ecstasy tablets are believed to have caused many deaths in the US and Europe.

Effects of MDMA

MDMA changes the brain’s chemistry by enhancing the release of neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine in the synapse of brain cells. It also inhibits their reuptake. These neurotransmitters help control your motor functions and sensory perception. An excess makes users more sensitive to light, taste, touch and smell.

MDMA increases heart rate, blood pressure and can disable the body’s ability to regulate its own temperature. MDMA’s release of the brain chemical norepinephrine also causes sweating, rapid and irregular heartbeats, fatigue, muscle aches, involuntary muscle contraction such as jaw-clenching, and insomnia, as well as uncontrolled rolling eye movements where the eyes roll around, sometimes towards the back of the head.

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Pacifiers and candy bracelets are often used by those under the influence to prevent constant jaw clenching, teeth grinding, and lip chewing. Menthol inhalers and surgical masks are often used to enhance the effects of MDMA.

Appetite suppression carries on 8-12 hours after taking MDMA. When the body’s energy reserves are depleted, the user begins burning muscle tissue adding to physical stress levels and lowering the immune system. As the effects of the drug wear off, the user’s brain cannot release normal amounts of serotonin. This causes difficulty sleeping, fatigue, achiness and a mood crash. Many people experience depression for days and even weeks after using MDMA. This is caused by MDMA’s action on brain chemistry.

Effects of Ketamine & PCP

Ketamine and phencyclidine (PCP, or “Angel Dust”) are often snorted and dissolved in beverages. They have similar molecular structures and create similar effects including numbness, loss of coordination, sense of invulnerability, muscle rigidity, aggressive/violent behavior, slurred or blocked speech, exaggerated sense of strength, and a blank stare. The effects typically last approximately an hour or less, with the overt hallucinatory effects also being short-acting. However, the user’s senses, judgment, memory and coordination can be affected for up to three days after initial use of these drugs.

Effects of Rohypnol & GHB

Rohypnol and GHB have a reputation as drugs used to sexually assault women and men. They can be slipped into drinks very easily, and the victim becomes either very open to suggestion or passes out entirely, leaving him or her vulnerable to the person who spiked the drink. They are known as “date rape” drugs because blackouts and amnesia make sexual assaults a very real possibility, with the victim either unaware of what happened or too confused or ashamed to admit it. Particularly if mixed with alcohol, these drugs can cause vomiting, coma and death by respiratory failure.

Focus Questions

1. What are some examples of “club drugs”?
2. What are some reasons people take these drugs?
3. What is a “designer drug”?
4. What is tolerance? What happens to MDMA users when they develop a tolerance to the drug?
5. What are some of the body systems affected by MDMA?
6. What are some negative effects of ketamine abuse? Describe a “K-hole.”
7. What are two “date rape” drugs? How can you protect yourself from accidentally ingesting these drugs?
8. How did the people interviewed in the program put themselves in physical jeopardy? What psychological problems were caused by their drug use?

Vocabulary

hyperthermia — A condition involving elevated body temperature and extreme overheating.

hyponatremia — A condition caused by drinking too much water where excess fluid intake swells the brain resulting in coma.

GHB — (gamma hydroxyl-butyrate) A clear, slightly salty-tasting liquid originally developed as a sleep aid. It is a central nervous system depressant that is typically sold in small bottles. It is often added by the capful to beverages, particularly alcohol, and consumed orally. It is also available in capsule form. GHB can make the user feel dizzy and sleepy, and can sometimes cause vomiting, muscle spasms, and loss of consciousness. Overdoses will always cause loss of consciousness (temporary coma), and will slow down breathing. If mixed with alcohol, GHB can slow breathing down to a dangerously low rate, causing death by respiratory failure.

ketamine — A rapid-acting general anesthetic used to prepare people and animals for surgery. It has sedative-hypnotic, analgesic, and hallucinogenic properties similar to phencyclidine.

MDMA — (3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine) An illegal drug that produces both stimulant and psychedelic effects. Street names for the drug are ecstasy, E, XTC, X and Adam. People report distorted time and exaggerated sensory perception while under the influence of the drug. A sense of alertness like that associated with amphetamine use is also commonly reported. A single tablet bought at a rave can cost as much as \$50, though more commonly \$20-\$30. Ecstasy pills are stamped or impressed with a wide variety of designs and logos, and new designs and logos emerge often.

neurotransmitter — A chemical released by a neuron at a synapse to relay information to an adjacent nerve cell.

phencyclidine — (PCP, or angel dust) A dissociative anesthetic drug that can cause feelings of euphoria as well as depression and anxiety, along with paranoid and violent behavior.

psychological dependence — A craving or compulsion for repeated use of a drug despite any adverse effects that may occur.

physical dependence — The process that occurs when the body has adapted to the presence of a drug and reduces its own production of neurotransmitters. When drug users develop physical dependence, withdrawal symptoms occur if use of the drug is reduced or stopped abruptly.

relapse — To slip back into addiction.

Rohypnol — (flunitrazepam) A tranquilizer that is not legal in the United States. Known to users as “roofies,” this drug in tablet form is smuggled into the country by drug traffickers. Rohypnol dissolves quickly after it is slipped into someone’s drink and the victim becomes very open to suggestion and physically weak, or passes out entirely.

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