

Understanding potential outcomes of drug use

Overview

While alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis remain the most accessible and used substances among adolescents, new drugs are always emerging. By understanding basic principles of drug risk, students will be able to assess the level and nature of the potential effects that are a part of any substance-using situation, whether it involves a new drug or a familiar one. Through review of a story of a teen faced with making a decision about trying a drug new to her, and using small- and large-group discussion, this lesson examines the concepts of risk, perceived benefit, and harm¹ with a focus on a substance that has emerged in recent years in BC – crystal methamphetamine.

Lesson Learning Outcomes

Students will develop an understanding of:

- ✓ The concepts of substance-related effects;
- ✓ The perceived benefits and harms associated with crystal methamphetamine use;
- ✓ Factors that contribute to substance-related harm;
- ✓ Measures that can be taken to reduce substance-related harm.

METH BASICS

- » • Knowledge of the potential use effects associated with crystal meth use
- » • Knowledge of elements of a situation that could increase harm from crystal meth use
- » • Knowledge and skills for reducing the potential harms of crystal meth use

¹ Harm is an actual negative outcome (e.g., poisoning; dependency); risk is the likelihood or probability that a harm will occur, for example, “youth who begin drinking before the age of 15 are 40% more likely than other youth to develop a later dependency” (Grant and Dawson, 1997).

Links to BC Curriculum PLO

- *Health and Career Education (2005)*

Substance Misuse Prevention: Assess the potential physical, emotional, and social consequences for themselves and others if they misuse substances;

Safety and Injury Prevention: Propose strategies to avoid unnecessary risks in a variety of situations on the road and in the community.

- *Social Studies (1997)*

Applications of Social Studies: Identify and clarify a problem, an issue, or an inquiry;

Applications of Social Studies: Defend a position on a controversial issue after considering a variety of perspectives.

Preparation and Materials

1

Make copies of:

- *Crystal Methamphetamine Fact Sheet* (Activity 2 & Home Link)
- *Story about Jasmine* (Activity 2)
- *Story about Jasmine – Question Sheet* (Activity 2)
- *Home Link Activity Guide*
- *Comprehension Assessment Tool* (one for each group)

2

Review and become familiar with the material in the Teacher Discussion Points.

Time Frame



45 minutes

Procedure

Lesson starter

Indicate that, although very few BC students have tried it, crystal methamphetamine (meth) is currently a drug of concern in the province and elsewhere, and that a 2003 study found that those students who have tried crystal meth, typically did so at around the age of the students in your classroom (15 years of age). As a result, this class will use a scenario involving crystal meth to examine the potential outcomes of using this drug.

Activity 1 (full class)

- Indicate:

- 1** That the difference between risk and harm is that harm is an actual documented negative outcome linked to a substance (e.g., a negative health consequence or dependency) whereas risk is the likelihood or probability that a harm will occur.
- 2** That people when using any substance seek some sort of benefit (e.g. less pain, not being so shy); in many cases these benefits are achieved initially; however, it is the nature of mood-altering substances that over time these effects tend to diminish and change, often resulting in negative effects.

Activity 2 (small group)

- Divide the class into groups of 4 to 6 students, depending on class size, and distribute copies of the *Crystal Meth Fact Sheet* and the *Story about Jasmine* to each student, along with a copy of the *Question Sheet* for each group.
- Have groups work together to review the story and respond to the questions.

Activity 3 (full class)

- Once the groups have had 15 to 20 minutes to consider the scenario and respond to the questions, ask each group to share their responses to each question in the full group.
- Using the *Teacher's Discussion Points* provided, ensure that the key points related to each question are reinforced.
- While the group representatives are presenting their ideas, watch for evidence that the group's discussion generated an understanding of the difference between harms and risks and that they understand the notion of "perceived benefits" associated with substance use; use the information to complete a *Comprehension Assessment Tool* for each group.



Closing question

Ask students about the statement from the story, “Everyone is doing it”. Based on their knowledge, how accurate do they think that statement is? Indicate that surveys indicate that about 5% of BC students (Grade 7-12) report having used crystal methamphetamine at some point in their lives.

Closing point

Clearly, the best way to avoid harms from any substance is to not use it, which, in the case of crystal meth, is what the vast majority of BC students do.

Assessment

-  Decision making around substance use is a complex balance of weighing perceived benefits against the potential risk of harming oneself and/or others. The activities in this unit provide students with an opportunity to reflect on the concepts and to practice assessing and weighing them.
-  The predominant activity here takes place within a group setting. Rather than focus on individual students, the assessment approach for the activities included here focuses on the risk and perceived benefit comprehension skills of each small group. A *Comprehension Assessment Tool* is provided.

Home Link



- This home link activity provides an opportunity for families to focus on crystal methamphetamine, a drug that has had much recent public attention, but which they may not know much about.
- By individually reviewing the crystal methamphetamine fact sheet and contributing “Three Facts Everyone Needs to Know about Crystal Meth, family members will build a better understanding of this substance.
- Provide students with a copy of the *Crystal Methamphetamine Fact Sheet* and the *Home Link Activity Guide*.

Extension activity



- With students having become familiar with Jasmine's story, break down and analyse the scenario by identifying the factors that came into play within the categories of person, drug, and context (cf. **no2meth** Grade 7 lesson)
- Examples of factors that may come into play within each category include the following:

Person: general health, gender, personality, mood, expectations, level of anxiety or relaxation, experience with the substance (i.e. knowing what to expect), whether dependent on the substance, history of problematic substance use in the family;

Drug: what's in the substance, the level of concentration of the active ingredient in the substance, amount consumed, how it is consumed [eaten, smoked, sniffed, injected];

Context: stability vs. confusion of the surrounding situation, relaxing environment vs. stressful situation, among a group of adults vs. strangers vs. a group of friends, what else is going on (e.g. undertaking a complex task, while engaged in sexual activity, while using other substances).

- Next ask students (in small group or full class) to brainstorm ways that the situation could have become more risky by manipulating the factors; finally ask them to discuss how it might have become a less risky situation.



Story about Jasmine



It's Friday night and Jasmine and her friends are in Jasmine's family room deciding what to do for the evening. Jasmine's parents have gone out and the girls have the house to themselves. Amanda is the last to arrive. She excitedly tells the girls that Devin, the Grade 12 guy she's been hanging out with, has invited her and her friends to a party at his friend's house. The girls think about it and decide it sounds like much more fun than watching a video. Getting there could be a problem, though, so the girls quickly add up their combined funds to make sure they have enough money to get there and back. Together, the five girls come up with \$40 and decide it's enough to go with.

After a 45 minute bus ride, the girls arrive at the house where the party is happening. Once inside, Amanda spots Devin and leaves the other girls to be with him. Nicole is annoyed that Amanda has abandoned them and tells the other girls that she thinks Amanda just used them to have company and money to get to the party. Jasmine points out that they are at the party now and they might as well enjoy themselves, with or without Amanda. The girls find a place to sit down and take a look to see if they know anyone. Although they thought everyone at the party would be older, they are surprised to see other kids from grade nine and ten at their school.

After a while, Nicole and Grace head to the bathroom, leaving Jasmine and Hannah alone on the sofa. A few minutes later, Josh, a guy she's noticed from her school, comes up to Jasmine and asks if he can join her. Jasmine flashes her friend the "he's hot" look and makes a space for him. They begin to talk but the music is loud and she can hardly hear what he is saying. After a while, he grabs her hand, pulls her to her feet and yells "Come on."

The two go out into the kitchen where several kids (including a couple that are among the cooler kids at school) are sitting around the table. There is something that looks like chips of glass on the table. Josh points and putting an arm around Jasmine, says "Have some ice."

"What? What do you mean?" Jasmine has no idea what he is talking about.

"Ice. Tina. You know! Crystal meth."

Jasmine is starting to feel really uncomfortable and really alone and takes a step backwards.

"Oh come on. Everyone is doing it and it's great!"

Okay, Jasmine. It's time to make a decision.

What are you going to do?



Story about Jasmine



Question Sheet

1. What are some of the risks involved in accepting the offer?

2. What might Jasmine perceive as being positive from accepting the offer?

3. What are some of the risks involved in NOT accepting the offer?

4. What steps could Jasmine have taken to reduce her risks? What steps can she take even if the offer is accepted?



Story about Jasmine



Teacher's discussion points

1. What are some of the risks involved in accepting the offer?

- a. If she chooses to accept the offer, she's putting herself in a potentially vulnerable position with people she does not know that well.
- b. Jasmine, as a first time user of a substance, will have no real understanding of what she will experience so things could go wrong in several ways – she may become uncomfortable or overwhelmed by the experience or she could injure or embarrass herself or others.
- c. It's impossible for her to know the actual contents of something presented as crystal meth (there are no quality control standards with illegal drugs) so it's difficult to predict the actual effect she may experience.
- d. There are a number of ways the situation could become more risky for Jasmine: while under the influence of crystal meth, she may be more inclined to try other substances which can lead to unpredictable effects; she may have difficulty navigating a sexual situation effectively; she may find herself in a car with a driver who's also intoxicated.
- e. If the party gets out of hand, it may draw the attention of the police – among the charges that could be laid is use/possession of an illegal substance.
- f. While the initial experience of using crystal meth can be pleasurable, the pursuit of re-experiencing this initial feeling can lead to repeated use or the use of higher dosages, resulting in tolerance (needing more to get the same effect) or dependence (needing to take the drug to avoid feeling sick).



Story about Jasmine



2. What might Jasmine perceive as being positive from accepting the offer?

- a. Jasmine may be interested in becoming more socially involved and using crystal meth with this group may provide a route to new friends.
- b. She may really enjoy the empowered feeling she has while using the drug, and appreciate the possibility that it will help her control her weight (note these benefits do not hold up – if she tries to “chase” them, she’ll find she needs to use more for the same effect, which can lead to the vicious cycle of tolerance and dependence).
- c. Are there other less risky ways that Jasmine could gain these benefits?

3. What are some of the risks involved in NOT accepting the offer?

- a. She might be rejected by the group.
- b. If she does not handle the situation effectively, Josh, or others in the group could become aggressive or violent (crystal meth can contribute to violent behaviour).

4. What steps could Jasmine have taken to reduce her risks? What steps can she take even if the offer is accepted?

- a. She might have made a “stick together agreement” with her friends before going and not allowed herself to be separated from them.
- b. Engage the class in a discussion of ways to ensure she minimizes all potential risks including the additional risks of riding in a vehicle with a substance-affected driver; potential unwanted sexual activity; or the use of multiple substances or injecting, which carry heightened risk for health and safety consequences.

Comprehension Assessment tool

Group of students being rated: _____

Skill	Rating Categories		
	Level One (1)	Level Two (2)	Level Three (3)
Understanding of Risks	Group members do not seem to understand the concept of “risk” and are not able to apply it to class material.	Group members seem to understand the concept of “risk” but have some difficulty applying it to class material.	Group members understand the concept of “risk” and are able to accurately describe risks associated with the material covered in class.
Understanding of Harms	Group members do not seem to understand the concept of “harm” as different from “risk” and are not able to apply it to class material.	Group members seem to understand the concept of “harm” as different from “risk” but have some difficulty applying it to class material.	Group members understand the concept of “harm” and are able to accurately describe potential harms associated with the material covered in class.
Understanding of Perceived Benefits	Group members do not seem to understand the concept of “perceived benefits” in relation to substance use and are not able to apply it to class material.	Group members seem to understand the concept of the “perceived benefits” of substance use but have some difficulty applying it to class material.	Group members understand that substance use can have “perceived benefits” and are able to accurately describe possible benefits teens might associate with substance use.
Overall Level (add the three ratings/ levels and divide by three)			





Three facts everyone needs to know about crystal meth

grade 9 home link activity guide

Student guide:

With this home link activity, your family members will have a chance to learn factual information on crystal methamphetamine – a drug they’ve likely heard a lot about but don’t know much about. To do this activity:

-  bring home the *Crystal Methamphetamine Fact Sheet* and this *Guide*;
-  ask each member to take the time to read the fact sheet and agree on a time when you can get together to present and discuss your three facts everyone needs to know about crystal meth.

Parent guide:

In the lesson, Understanding potential outcomes of drug use, students used crystal meth as a drug to examine concepts of risk, perceived benefit and harm when it comes to substance use.

Although only a few students in BC (approximately 1 in 20) ever use crystal meth, its use can cause significant harm and it appears that age 15 is the average age of trying the drug in BC. So, it makes sense for families of Gr. 9 students to obtain factual information on this drug. This activity allows you to do this; here’s how:

- 1 everyone participating needs to find 10-15 minutes to review the *Crystal Methamphetamine Fact Sheet*, and, while reading, note what they consider the 3 most important facts a person should know about the drug;
- 2 find 20-30 minutes that suits everyone to share your 3 facts and discuss them;
- 3 it’s not important to agree on the 3 facts, but it’s most helpful if everyone provides some reasoning behind their choices; so if your child doesn’t provide reasoning, ask why they think a particular fact is important.

Wrap-up thought: clearly, the best way to avoid harms from any substance is to not use it, which is what the vast majority of BC students do when it comes to crystal meth.

METHAMPHETAMINE fact sheet

Methamphetamine: what's in it and how it works

Methamphetamine is a powerful drug – a *stimulant*. Like all stimulants, including coffee and cocaine, methamphetamine increases the activity of your nervous system, speeding up your heart rate and breathing, and stimulating the brain.

Methamphetamine comes in many forms: pills, capsules, powder, or crystals (which look like shards of ice or glass). Most commonly, people smoke or swallow it. Some people may snort or inject it. The effects of the drug can last for an entire day.

Some methamphetamine pills are manufactured legally by pharmaceutical companies. Most methamphetamine however is made in makeshift operations by people who don't always know how to make it properly. These manufacturers may use chemicals extracted from products they buy in stores, such as iodine, drain cleaner, paint thinner, or camping fuel. In Canada, it is illegal to make, sell, buy, or use methamphetamine, unless prescribed by a doctor.

Why do people use methamphetamine

Some adults might use methamphetamine because they think it will give them extra energy to help them work or study harder. Other people use the drug for recreational reasons (such as at parties). Some people might just be curious, or use it as an attempt to relieve boredom. There are people who use methamphetamine for medical reasons, such as for Parkinson's disease.

Teens and methamphetamine

Teens may try methamphetamine for many of same reasons as adults, though they might not realize the downside of drug use. Some teens may experiment with methamphetamine because they are curious. They may have heard about the high they can get. Or they may have heard it can help them study. Some may want to experiment and see if the drug makes them more social.

Methamphetamine is especially harmful to young people. A teen's brain is not fully developed. Regular use of methamphetamine can cause brain damage.

How common is methamphetamine use in BC?

- Approximately 5% of BC public school students in Grades 7 through 12 have tried methamphetamine.
- The vast majority of students (86%, according to one survey) have never used any of the "party drugs", which include methamphetamine and ecstasy.

forms of meth:



Pills / Capsules



Powder



Crystals

How does methamphetamine affect a person?

Methamphetamine affects brain activity by binding strongly with the pleasure receptors in the brain. A low dose of methamphetamine may produce the following effects: an increase in energy and alertness, increased feelings of self-confidence, reduced appetite and improved mental and physical performance.

These effects diminish and change with high dose and frequent use. Happiness becomes crankiness. Energy becomes tiredness. Alertness becomes poor memory. Confidence becomes depression. People who use a lot of methamphetamine may begin to feel extremely anxious and miserable.





Over time, people may lose interest in their appearance. They can develop tooth and gum problems, or skin sores. They may grind their teeth, or experience tremors, hostility or paranoia.

Risks of using methamphetamine

Buying and using methamphetamine off the street is risky! Some of the people who make the drug add things that don't belong to make the production cheaper so they can make more money. This also makes the drug even more dangerous.

Regular use of methamphetamine can lead to a need to use more of the drug to achieve the desired effect. This is called *tolerance*. As a person develops tolerance, their risk of developing *dependence* to methamphetamine greatly increases. Dependence involves the need to use a drug in order to feel normal and function properly.

METHAMPHETAMINE USE IS PARTICULARLY RISKY WHEN A PERSON IS:

-  **Mixing methamphetamine with other drugs.** Mixing is extremely dangerous because it can lead to overdose and death.
-  **Using needles.** People who inject the drug are more likely to become dependent or get a serious disease, such as AIDS or Hepatitis C.
-  **Pregnant or breastfeeding.** Expectant or breastfeeding women should never use the drug. Methamphetamine can have negative effects on baby's development and growth.
-  **A long-term heavy user.** Persons who use significant doses of methamphetamine for a long time may stop taking care of their hygiene, or eating and sleeping properly. This combined with the drug's impact on the brain can lead to significant brain and organ damage. Symptoms of long-term use include:
 - Hearing or seeing things that are not there
 - Repetitive behaviour patterns, like picking at your skin, or pulling your hair
 - Formication (the feeling that there are bugs crawling on your skin)
 - Paranoid thoughts that can lead a person to be aggressive
 - Thoughts about hurting yourself or others