Facilitator Guide for Teachers and Educators

Substance Use Health, Addictions and Related Behaviours: Alcohol (Grade 5)

Introduction
This module provides educators who teach students in grade 5 with a lesson on alcohol. The module supports the learning objectives of The Health & Physical Education Ontario Curriculum for the 2023-2024 school year.

Learning objectives
By the end of this presentation students will be able to better understand:

- What alcohol is, and the short and long-term effects
- Alcohol strength
- What alcohol overdose is, and how to respond
- Problems occurring with alcohol use
- Impaired driving
- Second hand effects of alcohol
- Addiction
- How to respond to peer pressure
- Healthy ways to boost dopamine levels and cope with stress
- Stigma
- Reducing harm
- Recovery

Purpose
Improving and protecting the health and well-being of school-aged children and youth is a priority for Ontario’s public health sector. Childhood is a time when health practices and behaviours are learned, and adolescence is a period when both positive health behaviours and risk behaviours can be adopted. Because curriculum for the school year may be delivered at various times by different educators, this guide allows the educator to deliver self-paced content related to Substance Use...
Health, Addictions and Related Behaviours in the classroom at their convenience. Depending on the level of discussion, student engagement, and the preferences of the educator, the length of this presentation can vary from approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Please ensure familiarization of the content prior to teaching to ensure there is sufficient time within classroom hours.

About this guide
This guide is intended as a supplemental resource for educators who choose to deliver the health modules developed by Ottawa Public Health (OPH). As content is updated annually and/or when new evidence emerges, we encourage educators to frequently check back on the School Health Online webpage to access the most up-to-date content.

Additional resources
For more information on substance use health, addictions and related behaviours, available services, and resources please visit the following:

- School Health Online
- The Link Ottawa – Alcohol
- Ottawa Public Health – Alcohol
- Substance Use Health Services and Resources
- Tips for Talking About Substance Use
- People-First Language: Substance Use Disorder and Stigma

Disclaimer
The information provided is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Educators should encourage students to consult their parents or guardians, and/or qualified healthcare professionals for personal guidance related to alcohol. Educators should approach questions about alcohol with sensitivity, respect, and an understanding of the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of their students. When responding to a student question, the response should be adapted to reflect the age and maturity of the student as well as the classroom environment and individual school policies.

Considerations
Becoming informed about a topic prior to discussing it in a classroom setting, will help create a productive and comfortable conversation with youth. This module includes topics that some students may find uncomfortable and/or difficult to understand. Here are some considerations to support the students’ learning experience:

- Be sensitive to different backgrounds and experiences.
  - As much as possible, be aware of experiences in your students’ lives that may make certain discussions uncomfortable for them. Consider letting students know ahead of time that the topic will be discussed in class and use proper judgment if accommodations are needed.

- Watch for signs of discomfort.
  - Monitor students’ faces and body language.

- Allow ample time for discussion.
  - Allow enough time to introduce the topic, discuss as a group, summarize, and answer questions.
  - Using an anonymous “question box” may encourage students to ask questions they otherwise would not feel comfortable asking in front of the class.

**Continued collaboration**

Our commitment to improving health outcomes is an ongoing journey*. We encourage you to share feedback and suggestions for improvement on this module, using our feedback form found on our School Health Online webpage. Together, we can continuously refine our resources to better the evolving needs of our school communities.

*Last updated: September 2023
Before we start…

It is always important to create a safe learning environment when addressing health topics that may be sensitive to some students. Establishing some ground rules or going over classroom etiquette can be helpful.

Here are some examples:

- Some students might want to share personal stories. Ask that students do not share names or situations that might give away who they are talking about to respect people's privacy.
- Ensure that all classroom discussions will remain confidential unless a student shares something that may lead to believe that they are in danger, or that they are putting themselves or others at risk.

*Please take the time to also review the considerations on page 3 of this guide.
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Slide 3

Let students provide answers before giving information below.

Alcohol is:

- A drug. It is the most commonly used drug among Canada’s youth.
- A clear liquid that is made using fruits, vegetables, and/or grains. Alcoholic beverages get their distinctive colours from other ingredients, and from the process of fermentation. The process of fermentation also removes any vitamins or nutrients from the fruits and vegetables used.
- A depressant which means it slows down parts of the brain that affect thinking, behaviour, breathing and heart rate.
- Found in:
  - liquor (vodka, gin, rum, whiskey, etc.)
  - wine
  - beer
  - cider
  - cooler
- People must be at least 19 years old in Ontario to buy alcohol.

Slide 4

Note: Be sure to start every question with “Which answer is false?”

B. The brain controls thinking, alcohol affects the brain. Alcohol slows down thinking and makes it hard to think clearly and make decisions. People drinking a lot of alcohol are more likely to take risks and make poor decisions because their judgment is affected.

Question 1

Which answer is false?

Alcohol...

A. is a drug
B. can help people think more clearly
C. can make people want to fight
D. can be made from fruits
E. is a depressant
Alcohol percentages (strength) vary from 4% to over 40% depending on the drink. This means depending on the drink, there can be different levels of alcohol.

**Let's compare with a common drink a lot of us enjoy: Lemonade**

*click*

The percentage of alcohol in liquor is 40%, which is high. We’ll compare this to squeezed lemon juice, which is very concentrated and tart.

*click*

To make lemon juice less tart, water is added to create a lemonade. This is comparable to wine, which has 12% of alcohol.

*click*

If the lemonade is still too tart, more water and lots of ice is added to make it even less concentrated. This is comparable to beer, which has 5% of alcohol.

Although the three lemonade drinks differ in size, they all have the exact same amount of lemon juice.

Similarly, the liquor, wine and beer shown all have the same amount of alcohol. The type of alcohol does not matter, it’s the percentage of alcohol or the strength. A higher percentage means more alcohol and a stronger drink which means a person would have to consume less to feel the effects.

The most important information to remember is alcohol comes in different percentages or strengths and when a person chooses to consume alcohol, they must understand that this comes with risks.
When a person drinks alcohol, it is absorbed into their blood and travels to the brain. They will start to feel the short-term effects usually within an hour of drinking alcohol. How quickly someone feels the short-term effects of alcohol depends on many factors which we will talk about next.

Some people feel happy, want to talk more, and feel relaxed when they drink a small amount of alcohol. Other people may feel sad and angry. The more alcohol a person drinks at one time, the more they will feel the short-term effects.

Examples of short-term effects are:
- Slower thinking
- Slower reflexes
- Harder to make good decisions (take more risks) because they can’t think clearly
- Loss of memory (“blackout”)
- Can’t pay attention
- Less muscle control
- Trouble walking
- Blurred vision
- Slurred speech
- Feeling tired
- Vomiting
- Intoxication - means someone is “drunk” - they have drunk a lot of alcohol.

These short-term effects increase the chances of getting hurt and sometimes can lead to death because of falls, violence, or a motor vehicle crash.
D. Increased alertness is not a short-term effect of drinking alcohol. Drinking alcohol slows down thinking and can make a person feel tired.

How long a person feels the effects of alcohol depends upon many factors starting with how much they had to drink and the strength (%) of the alcohol.

Alcohol is removed from the blood/body through the liver. The liver can only remove a certain amount of alcohol at a time. The amount of time the liver takes to remove alcohol is different for everyone. There is nothing you can do to speed up the time the liver needs to remove alcohol, so the person no longer feels the effects of alcohol (meaning they are “sober”).

How long someone feels the effects of alcohol depends on:

- The amount the person drinks
- The strength or % of alcohol - *higher % of alcohol will cause someone to feel the effects faster than a lower % of alcohol the more they drink.*
- How quickly the person drinks
- If the person is tired
- The person’s sex
- The person’s body type
- If the person has had something to eat before drinking alcohol
- Medication or other substances the person has taken
- Health of the person i.e., Healthy liver
A person will stop feeling the effects of alcohol once they have stopped drinking and the liver has had enough time to remove the alcohol from their body.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide 9</th>
<th>A. How long someone feels the effects of alcohol does not depend on the person taking a cold shower.</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 3</th>
<th>Which answer is false?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. takes a cold shower</td>
<td>A. How long someone feels the effects of alcohol does not depend on the person taking a cold shower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. drinks a little or a lot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. is tired</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. is taking any other substances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. has had something to eat</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Slide 10 | • Also known as alcohol poisoning.  
• Your body and brain can only handle a certain amount of alcohol at a time. It occurs when high amounts of alcohol in the blood travel to the brain affecting its ability to work.  
• Alcohol overdose is a medical emergency because the nerves that control breathing are slowed.  
• The gag reflex which prevents choking is also slowed so a person can choke on their vomit.  
• If a person going through an alcohol overdose does not get to a hospital right away, the person could go into a coma or die.  

**Signs of alcohol poisoning include:**  
• Bluish/greyish, cold, clammy skin  
• Vomiting  
• Vomiting without waking up  
• Not waking when pinched (meaning the person is unconscious)  
• Slowed breathing  
• Incontinence (can go to the bathroom on themselves)  

If a person has these symptoms, call 911.
Never think a person who has drunk a lot of alcohol will sleep it off. A cold shower will not make them more alert. Get help right away and don’t leave them alone.

Slide 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 4</th>
<th>Which answer is false?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. needs help right away</td>
<td>B. will wake up with coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. may have blue/grey, cold, clammy skin</td>
<td>D. may vomit without waking up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. may have slowed breathing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. A person experiencing an alcohol overdose will not wake up with coffee and needs medical help right away. Call 9-1-1.

Slide 12

- Alcohol travels to the brain through the blood causing temporary changes in how the brain works.
- A youth’s brain is still developing until their mid 20’s, drinking a lot of alcohol can lead to possible lifelong negative effects on how the brain works - memory, motor skills (ability to move) and coordination can all be affected.
- Youth who drink a lot of alcohol at an early age are more likely to develop an addiction to alcohol.
### Slide 13
**Question 5**
Which answer is false?

- **A**. youth’s brain can be negatively affected by alcohol because...
- **B**. the brain is still developing.
- **C**. alcohol negatively affects the brain.
- **D**. the brain continues to grow until the mid 20’s.
- **E**. alcohol never leaves the brain.

**E. Alcohol eventually leaves the brain and is removed by the liver.**

### Slide 14
**What are the long-term effects?**

Long-term effects of alcohol occur when a person drinks a large amount of alcohol regularly, over many years.

Some long-term effects of drinking alcohol are:

- Negative effects on the brain and nerves
- High blood pressure and stroke
- Liver disease
- Diseases of the stomach, digestive system and pancreas
- Different cancers including breast, throat, mouth, liver and digestive (colon, rectal and esophagus)
- Depression
- Fetal Alcohol spectrum disorders - a group of conditions that a person could have if their parent drank alcohol while they were pregnant. These effects can include physical problems and problems with behavior and learning.
- Addiction
Slide 15

**Question 6**
Which answer is false?

A long-term effect of drinking alcohol can be...

- A. Hair loss
- B. Cancer
- C. Negative effects on the brain
- D. Depression
- E. Liver disease

**(A)** Long term effects of drinking alcohol do not include hair loss.

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Slide 16

**What problems can happen with alcohol use?**

When problems happen with alcohol use, the person's drinking is putting themselves and others in situations that can be unsafe.

Examples of problems happening with alcohol use include:

- **Binge drinking:** when someone has many drinks (five or more drinks for a male, or four or more drinks for a female) at one time (CAMH, 2021)
- **Drinking at a young age:** (while the brain is still developing). Should wait till their older to avoid negative effects discussed earlier in the presentation.
- **A person drinking alcohol when they are pregnant,** because alcohol can have negative effects on the baby (CCSA guidelines, 2012).
- **Drinking while doing any physical activity** (skiing/snowboarding, biking, swimming) (CCSA guidelines, 2012).
- **Drinking while driving a vehicle** (driving a car, boat, snowmobile, ATV) (CCSA guidelines, 2012).
C. Alcohol is legal for adults over the age of 19. Having a glass of wine with dinner is not an example of a problem with alcohol use, but it does not mean that it can’t become one. Problems with alcohol can occur anytime a person’s drinking is putting them and/or others in unsafe situations. For example, if the glass of wine at dinner is one of 5 glasses being consumed that same evening, it would be considered binge drinking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide 18</th>
<th>Impaired driving:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is impaired driving?</strong></td>
<td>• is also known as drunk driving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• means driving a bike, car, truck, boat, snowmobile, aircraft, train, ATV, jet ski or any other vehicle when someone has used a substance, like alcohol.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• is an example of a problem happening with substance use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• is not safe to be a passenger with a driver who is impaired by a substance like alcohol.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide 19</th>
<th>B. Impaired driving does not include driving without a seatbelt, although this is illegal.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 9</strong> Which answer is false?</td>
<td><strong>Impaired driving...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. is driving under the influence of a substance, like alcohol</td>
<td>• includes driving without a seatbelt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. includes driving without a seatbelt</td>
<td>C. increases the risk of getting into a crash</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. puts everyone at risk</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. includes driving under the influence of a prescription medication</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Physical dependence

- People, including youth, can develop a physical dependence to alcohol. This can happen with any amount of alcohol used.
- This means that their body gets used to regular amounts of alcohol and they will experience symptoms within hours of when they stop drinking it (withdrawal symptoms). These symptoms include sleeplessness, tremors, nausea, and seizures.
- People with a physical dependence to alcohol might feel like they cannot function without it or get anxious.

Physical dependence can lead to addiction. Both can happen to anyone, no matter their age.

Addiction

- Addiction refers to a complex medical condition that changes how the brain works [affecting a person’s reward, motivation (when we want to do something), stress, and executive function systems (allow us to plan, pay attention, remember instructions, and keep track of what we are doing)].
- Addictions are defined by the 4 “C”s:
  - use becomes Compulsive (uncontrollable urge)
  - continues even with harmful Consequences
  - have Cravings (strong need for substance)
  - Feeling a loss of Control

Addictions are not a choice and do not mean someone is bad or weak.

Some students may know someone who is living with an addiction. Emphasize the message of this slide.
Slide 22

C. Addiction refers to a complex medical condition that changes how the brain works. It is not a choice.

Slide 23

Alcohol can affect others who did not consume alcohol. These effects are referred to as "second-hand effects".

Often linked to drinking a lot (binge drinking) and includes:

- Violence
- Emotional or physical abuse
- Taking risks
- Impaired driving
- Costs to community services (such as hospitals, police, paramedic and treatment centers)
Slide 24

**How does drug addiction happen?**

**Addiction often occurs due to a combination of factors. These include:**

- **Genetic factors:** Some people are more vulnerable to the addictive properties of drugs and this can be inherited.
- **The way drugs interact with the brain:** Substances like alcohol and cannabis stimulate the brain in pleasurable ways, leading to a desire to repeat the experience. This is because substances that have addictive potential trigger the release of dopamine, a chemical associated with pleasure and reward in the brain.
- **The influence of others:** Factors such as the attitudes of peers, family, and culture towards substance use, as well as the home and community environment, can contribute to whether or not a person develops substance use issues.
- **Coping mechanism:** Some people turn to drugs in order to cope with stressful or difficult times, or even strong emotions. They then start relying on the substance to avoid feeling those strong emotions again and again.


Slide 25

**Responding to peer pressure**

**Peer pressure** is pressure from your peers, influencing you to do something or strongly convincing you to do something you would not normally do yourself.

Some ways that people may try to influence you are by telling you it’s “cool” and that you’ll fit in better if you do it. True friends would never pressure you into doing something that you don’t want to do.

It is important to know how to respond to peer pressure, and there are ways that you can say no to peer pressure.

Some of these refusal techniques include:

- Saying "No thanks" plainly and confidently – simple but effective, the “no thanks” technique without a lot of arguing and explaining is often the best and easiest response
- Reflect on your values and know what is important to you
- Surround yourself with good friends
- Walk away - if all else fails (and you can do so safely), remove yourself from the situation that is making you uncomfortable
How can someone naturally increase dopamine levels without turning to alcohol?

**Healthy ways to boost dopamine levels**

- **Exercise regularly**
  - Exercise is an amazing activity that not only keeps you physically active but also has the added benefit of increasing your endorphin levels and enhancing your mood. These positive effects can be experienced in as little as 10 minutes of engaging in fitness activities.

- **Eat healthy foods**
  - The food we consume plays a vital role in our emotional well-being. Our gut is often called our "second brain" due to the presence of numerous nerve cells that produce neurotransmitters, including dopamine, which are also found in our brain.

- **Get regular sleep**
  - Getting enough sleep is essential for our overall well-being due to a variety of reasons. Dopamine levels naturally increase upon waking in the morning and naturally decrease as evening approaches and we begin to feel tired.

- **Meditation/Spirituality**
  - Stress can naturally deplete dopamine in your body. To combat the impact of stress in your daily routine, engage in activities like massage therapy, meditation, or other mindfulness practices that can help you generate positive energy in your life.

https://canadiancentreforaddictions.org/a-natural-high-healthy-ways-to-boost-dopamine/

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Using positive coping strategies during stressful or difficult times:

- Helps to restore emotional balance and/or feel better about yourself
- Respectful of you, others, and property
- Helps you to solve the problem
- **Examples:**
  - Talk to a friend or a parent
  - Keep a journal
  - Text a friend (helps you connect with someone, but to be used in moderation)
  - Label your feelings and identify what is causing stress. (Example: “I am feeling sad/mad/nervous because…”)
  - Positive self-talk. (Example “I can do it”)

**Positive ways to cope with stress**

- Talk to someone you trust
  - Parent, friend, teacher, sibling, etc.
- Keep a journal
- Identify what is causing stress
- Label your feelings
- Positive self-talk
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| Slide 28 | Stigma:  
|---|---|  
| To have negative feelings and negative behaviours toward specific people or groups  
| • To have negative feelings (prejudice) and negative behaviours (discrimination) toward people, includes having fixed ideas and judgements about people or groups of people.  
| • People can experience stigma for a variety of reasons: race, sexuality, gender identity, age, illness.  
| • An example of Stigma- we may think that people with mental health or substance use problems are different or not like us; or that they caused their own problems; or that they can simply get over their problems if they want to.  
| • **Stigma can make people feel alone, and lead those living with an addiction to hide their symptoms and stop them from getting help.**  

| Slide 29 | Reducing Harm:  
|---|---|  
| • Reducing harm means keeping people as safe as possible when risks are involved.  
| • Many things involve risks, but we take measures that help keep us safer.  
| • Some examples from our everyday lives are the use of seatbelts in the car, wearing a helmet when riding a bike, stretching before and after a physical activity, even looking both ways before crossing a street.  

**What are some ways to reduce harms from drinking alcohol?**  
**For youth:**

- Break down a large task into smaller manageable pieces

**Using drugs to cope with stress or hard times is considered a **negative** coping strategy because it:**

- Does not restore emotional balance, and may make strong emotions (like anger) even worse
- May be harmful to you, others or property
- Does not solve the problem
- May create more problems (e.g., physical or mental health problems, relationship problems, etc.)
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- Delay starting to drink alcohol for as long as possible - the earlier a youth start to drink, the more often they drink, and the more likely they are to develop alcohol dependence or have problems with alcohol.
- Alcohol can harm the way the body and brain develop. Youth can speak to a trusted adult such as their parents about drinking. If they choose to drink, they should do so under parental guidance.

**Safer Drinking Tips:**

- Setting limits when drinking alcohol
- Drink slowly - no more than 2 drinks in any 3 hours. Guidelines under review and recommendation is limited to 2 standard drinks/week.
- For every drink of alcohol, having one non-alcoholic drink.
- Eating before and while drinking alcohol.
- Think about the factors talked about earlier in the presentation that affect how long someone feels the effects of alcohol - body type, medications, the health of the person, etc.

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**Recovery**

- We can't make someone stop using alcohol. Addiction is a medical condition and just like other medical conditions, a person may need help with their recovery. Ex: A person cannot heal a broken leg without the help of a doctor. A person living with an addiction may also need the help of a professional during their recovery journey.
- Recovery looks different for everyone. For someone who consumes alcohol, it can involve stopping the use of the substance completely or it can also be using less than they did before.
- “Recovery” does not mean that someone is “cured” (which makes it sound like they are no longer living with the condition). Being in recovery is a lifelong journey/daily decision.
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Where to find help

- An adult you trust from your school, family or community
- Youth Services Bureau (24/7)
  - YSB assists with service areas such as youth engagement, mental health services, community and housing services, employment services and youth justice services
  - Age 12+
  - Crisis Line: 613-260-2360
  - Crisis Chat: https://www.ysb.ca/
- Kids Help Phone
  - This resource provides confidential mental health services to youth in Canada.
  - Age Prioritization 5-25
  - Phone (24/7): 1-800-668-6868
  - Text (24/7): Text CONNECT to 686868
  - Live Chat: (open 7 pm – midnight ET) https://kidshelpphone.ca/live-chat-counselling/

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Continued Support

- Hope for Wellness Helpline (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) (24/7)
  A resource available to all Indigenous people across Canada, to assist when there are challenges, or to help connect with other wellness supports.
  - Telephone: 1-855-242-3310
  - Online Chat: https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/
- Rural Ottawa Youth (Rural schools only)
  An organization that works together to address the gaps in mental health services for youth in rural Ottawa.
  - Age 12-24
  - www.ruralottawayouth.ca
  - Instagram @RuralOttawaYouth
Slide 33

**References**
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
- Health Canada
- Canadian Lung Association
- Ottawa Public Health
- CAPSA