

HEALTH Need to Know

Drugs and Alcohol

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Fiction, Not Fact

Have you seen movies where characters drink alcohol? How about shows where someone does other drugs? These kinds of images are all over pop culture. But often, they are not realistic. They don't show the whole story. What is the truth about drugs?

More than three million people die each year because of alcohol and other kinds of drugs. This makes up almost 5 percent of all deaths around the world.



What Are Drugs?

Drugs are substances that affect the body. Sometimes, they are helpful.

Doctors **prescribe** drugs as medicine.

They are used to treat sicknesses.

Some people take drugs **recreationally**.

They use them because they like how the drugs make them feel. However, this is not always safe. Sometimes, it is **illegal**.

Taking medicine prescribed by a doctor is legal. In some cases, so is using alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis. However, there are many laws about drugs.



Depressants

Different kinds of drugs affect the body differently. They are grouped into categories.

Depressants (di-PRESS-uhntz) cause the brain and body to slow down. Doctors prescribe them for many reasons. These drugs help people sleep. They can make muscles relax. Some are used to fight anxiety.

Alcohol is a depressant.

Cannabis is usually included as part of this group, too. Cannabis is also known as marijuana, weed, and many other names.



Types of Drugs

Different drugs do different things. Review some of the key categories.

Type of Drug	Examples	Intended outcome of use	Effects on the body
Depressants 	• Alcohol • Cannabis • Sleep aids	Relaxing the brain and body	• Sleepiness • Slowed breathing and heartbeat • Slower brain function
Stimulants 	• Caffeine • Cocaine • Meth	Boosting the brain and body	• Increased breathing and heart rate • Shakiness • Nervousness and anxiety
Opioids 	• Pain killers • Fentanyl	Relieving pain	• Pain relief • Sleepiness • Nausea
Hallucinogens 	• LSD • Mushrooms	• No legal use • Recreationally used to change one's senses or feelings	• Changed way of seeing the world • A shift in emotions