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## **UNIT 2 COMMONLY USED DRUGS AND TARGET GROUPS**

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### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This unit will give you a detailed explanation of the kinds of drugs that are often abused. It will also give a clear understanding of the reasons why people abuse drugs. The aim of this unit is to help you understand more about various kinds of drugs which are addictive. It will give you also some details about their impact on our minds. The explanations will also help remove many of the wrong ideas you may have about drugs and drug abuse. When you complete reading this unit you will be able to:

- explain the kinds of drugs people abuse;
- understand the nature and actions of various kinds of drinks on the mind;
- understand why people abuse drugs;
- understand addiction as a disease; and
- distinguish the various groups of people who are likely to abuse drugs.

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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Many drugs like cannabis and alcohol have been abused by human kind from the earliest times. With more progress in science, today we are at to produce drugs which are a hundred times more powerful than alcohol and can influence the functioning of the brain. Not only are they powerful enough to alter the functioning of the human brain, but they are also very addictive. Many of the young people are ignorant about the real nature of these chemicals. Knowledge is power. This lesson gives you the correct picture of these chemicals which will enable you make right decisions about these chemicals and also pass on this information to other persons. Drugs are not dangerous. Only the wrong use of them is dangerous.

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## 2.2 WHY DO PEOPLE ABUSE DRUGS?

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People are different. So, they use or abuse drugs for different reasons. It is difficult to identify the exact reasons of drug abuse. Whatever may be the reason, drug abuse is harmful for the individual, family and the society. An addict is a person who continues to use drugs even when he knows that the drug he is using is killing him. He is not capable of stopping it.

The simple reason people use drugs is that it makes them happy. In other words, drugs are abused to get happiness. Every human being wants to be happy. Drugs can make people happy by making them forget their worries. That is why people continue to use them even when drugs are harming them directly. There are certain other reasons why drugs are abused. They are discussed below:

**Peer pressure:** All of us, young or old are greatly affected by what other people, especially our friends think about us. These influences on us in our thinking and actions is called *peer pressure*. Adolescents are more concerned about what their friends think about them. It is because they know much less about the world reality and truth, though they think they know everything. At this age the young ones are not able to distinguish right from wrong easily. We want to be accepted and admired by persons who are important to us. For the adolescent, his friends are the most important persons. So person will be ready to follow the demands of his friends, even when he does not like them.

Like drugs, peer pressure is good or bad according to what one does with it. If the friends are good, a person will be influenced for doing good. Unfortunately, the same peer pressure that acts on the group within an accepted code of behaviour can also push an individual towards the wrong path. Drug users,

since they have rather poor self-esteem, seek approval for their behaviour from their peers. So, they often convince others to join them and develop their habits as a way of winning acceptance.

**Curiosity:** Curiosity is an instinct. It helps us to seek and understand things that we do not know. Both young and old are influenced by curiosity, though it is the young ones who are more influenced. They see or hear what the drug can do to a person and want to experience what they think is real. The first taste and its effect on the user, greatly influences whether the individual continues to take drugs or not. The younger the age at which an individual first tries drugs, the more likely he or she is to try again.

**Ignorance:** Wrong information about drugs and their effects is common among the public. Governments, scientists, experts and others have had only limited success in communicating accurate information. As drug use has spread throughout the world, myths have grown and facts have been distorted and subjected to ridicule. Individuals often begin taking drugs as an experiment, with the belief that the substances are not dangerous. If the drug gives the effect that the individual is seeking then the user's lack of knowledge about the health consequences permits continued use. By the time the dangers are fully realized, it is too late for that person to stop taking drugs or to reverse the damage.

**Alienation:** Alienation is a kind of feeling a person can have as not being part of the group or the society where he lives or works. Human beings seem to require a sense of belonging, be it to a family, a tribe, a community, or a country. An individual does not feel that he belongs to any of these groups will do anything to belong to the group. Too often the willing group is composed of other people who feel similarly isolated and who have turned to drugs as an escape. Feeling welcome in the new environment, where drug use is acceptable, can lead to disastrous results, for the individual and for society as a whole.

**Changing social structure:** A society continues to change. Sometimes it changes so fast that all the members are not able to keep pace with the changes. Sometimes the changes are for the worse. When a society that served as a support group for members begins to change and they are not able to adapt, they will look for relief and help in the world of drugs. This happens because they are not able to understand the change or are not able to adapt to the needs of the changing circumstances. This is one of the reasons why an increasing number of youth from villages coming to the cities and becoming addicts. The sudden shift from the lifestyle in the villages to the towns has caused them to take refuge in drug abuse.

**Urbanization and unemployment:** In India our country, as in many parts of the world, large number of people from the villages come to the cities in search of job. Often, these people face a lot of problems. They are coming to a totally different of situation, which they find difficult to understand and adjust to. They will be separated from their family for the first time. The City life has different kinds of traditions and values, which a villager will find difficult to accept. With no family or a friends to support them they will feel lonely and isolated. This isolation will lead them to despair and boredom.

Many of those who come to the towns will have had very little education. This lead to unemployment. With all the traditional support gone, many of the migrant, will take to drugs as a solution to their loneliness and boredom.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Is there any one single reason for drug abuse? Explain briefly.

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## 2.3 THEORIES RELATED TO DRUG ABUSE

Drug abuse is a complex problem. Scientists, medical professionals and sociologists have been trying to understand these problems from different angles. This has produced many theories. Some of them explain why people begin to use drugs and others explain why people continue to use them. Some theories explain both the aspects.

### Biological Theories

- a) *Genetic theory:* This theory holds that alcoholism is an inherited disease. If a person is an alcoholic his/her child may also become an alcoholic. *The researchers have not succeeded in explaining how this happens.*
- b) *Endocrine theory:* Some scientists believe that alcoholism is the result of a dysfunction of the endocrine system. Due to certain failure in the endocrine system, such people cannot digest alcohol properly and this causes alcoholism.
- c) *Allergy related:* Some people due to some unidentifiable reasons are allergic to alcohol and so alcoholism is an allergic response than a disease.

### Psychological Theories

The foundation of this theory is that the addicts/alcoholics possess distinctive psychological traits which make up an alcoholic personality.

- a) *Psychoanalytic theory:* This holds the position that addiction of any kind is the result of repressed urges, childhood trauma, unmet needs or even self punishment. The root of addiction is in the unconscious mind, and so it is not possible for the person to get over the problem all by himself.

- b) *Learning theory*: This theory holds that addiction is a learnt habit. A person finds that drugs can solve problems from his experience. So whenever a person has problems he will turn to drugs to solve them. When such actions are repeated often, they become habits.
- c) *Personality trait theory*: This theory states that some persons have a predisposed personality that makes them addicts. Such kind of people cannot take stress and failures. They have unrealistic expectations about themselves and the world as a whole. They may be persons who are searching for the easy way out in life.

### Sociological Theories

Addicts seldom use drugs alone. Drug abuse is a social activity. Drugs are also used or abused for religious reasons as well. Therefore, it is natural to assume that drug abuse is influenced by socio-religious attitudes.

### Cultural Theory

This is directly applicable to the use of alcohol. There are three factors that determine the use of alcohol by a person. They are: the attitude of the society towards drinking, the other means the culture provides for releasing tension and the how the culture causes tension in the society. If a culture is rigid and causes more tension that the members can accept, it is possible that addiction may increase in such a society.

### Deviant Behaviour Theory

Addiction is some sort of rebellion against existing norms of the society, or other power structures. If a society considers addiction as a deviant behaviour it can encourage the rebellious addict to continue with his behaviour. As you see none of the theories fully explain the complex fact of addiction. More research is going on to understand more fully the various factors leading to addiction.

## 2.4 KINDS OF COMMONLY ABUSED DRUGS

The following table will give the names of commonly abused drugs, route of administration, its short-term and long-term effect, withdrawal syndrome and level of tolerance.

Name of the drug	Route	Short-term effect of tolerance	Long-term effect of abuse	Withdrawal syndrome	Level
1. Alcohol	Oral	Sense of well-being, Loss of inhibition, Lack of motor coordination, judgement;	Liver damage, Brain damage. Schizophrenia. Impairment of vital organs	Anxiety, Sleeplessness, Delirium tremens	Little
2. Narcotic Analgesics Opium Morphine Heroin Brown sugar Pethedine	Oral, Injected, Smoked	Sense of well-being up to 12 hrs, Loss of appetite, Drowsiness-	Mental impairment, Damage to respiratory system, Other health related problems	Vomiting, Diarrhoea. Cold, body cramps	Very high
3. Stimulants Cocaine, Amphith- emine	Oral Injected Snorted	Euphoria, Increased mental and physical alertness, high blood pressure	Acute anxiety, Nasal ulcer, Brain damage, Depression	Insomnia, Restlessness, Body cramps, Increased, appetite	Very high

4. Depressants Alcohol  Barbiturates Diazepam	Oral, Injected	Euphoria, Relief from anxiety, Loss of inhibitions, Poor physical and mental coordination	Depression, Fatigue Unclear vision,  Poor sleep, Impaired sexual function	Delirium tremens,  Restlessness, Diarrhoea, Vomiting	Very high
5. Hallucinogens LSD, Mescaline Phencyclidine, Psilocybin	Oral Injected	Mood swing, Heightened sense experience, Hallucinations	Depression, Mental illness, Flash backs physical withdrawal	Only psychic withdrawal syndromes, no syndromes	Low
6. Cannabis, Ganja, Charas, Hash oil	Smoked Injected	Euphoria, Increased heart beat, Heightened sensory perception, Alertness of senses	Fatigue, Paranoia Psychosis	Anxiety, Sleeplessness	Low

- Though alcohol is a stimulant, at higher doses, it is a depressant.

### Classification of Drugs According to their Effects

Drugs can be classified into four groups based on their effect on the central nervous system.

- Narcotic analgesics*: These are drugs that can relieve pain and deaden the nerves. Medically they refer to opium and opium derivatives or synthetic substitutes that can produce opium like effects.
- Stimulants*: They are drugs which excite or speed up the central nervous system. They are also known as 'uppers'.
- Depressants*: They are drugs, which depress or slow down the functions of the central nervous system. They calm down or induce sleep. Many of these drugs are used for treating mental illness.
- Hallucinogens*: Hallucinogens are drugs which dramatically affect perception, emotion and mental process. The user may experience panic, confusion, suspicion, anxiety and loss of control.

### Classification According to Origin

According to the origin of drugs, they can be classified as natural, semisynthetic, synthetic and designer drugs.

- Natural drugs*: They are naturally existing drugs, like opium, cannabis etc. No chemical process is needed for the production of these drugs.
- Semi synthetic drugs*: They are produced in the laboratory from natural drugs with the help of some chemicals. Heroin, alcohol etc. belong to this category.
- Synthetic drugs*: They are drugs produced with non organic materials in the laboratory, e.g. Methadone, barbiturates etc.
- Designer drugs*: These need special mention because of their very high addictive potential. They are mainly synthetic drugs, and are illegally produced. A designer drug is produced every time someone wants to transform an illegal drug, whose trafficking and manufacture are criminal offences into another drug with similar effects which does not figure on the list of forbidden substances, by adding a molecule to the original chain. Eg. Ecstasy, Synthetic heroin etc.

## **Alcohol**

The word alcohol comes from an Arabic word Aal-kuhul which means finely divided spirit. Usually, it is made from fermented starch and though it gives an initial lift, it is a depressant. There are many types of alcohol. Ethyl alcohol is what is commonly used as a drink. Most of the alcoholic drinks like whisky, gin, rum etc. contain 40 to 60 per cent of alcohol. Country spirit (local brew) may contain up to 65 per cent of alcohol.

Methyl alcohol is produced from wood through a chemical process. This is used for industrial purposes. This is a poisonous drink and we have witnessed many cases of persons dying due to drinking methyl alcohol.

Although it takes minutes for alcohol to reach the brain, it takes the liver an hour to break down the alcohol in a glass of wine (350 ml) or regular beer.

How fast alcohol can influence the body will depend on many factors:

- Speed of drinking,
- Body weight of the user—the lesser you weigh, the more alcohol affects you,
- Presence of food in the stomach,
- Alcoholic content in the drink, and
- Drinking experience.

A standard drink is one 425 ml glass of light beer (2.7% alcohol), one 285 ml glass of regular beer (4.9% alcohol), one 100 ml glass of wine (12% alcohol), or one 30 ml glass of arrack (40-50% alcohol).

## **Alcoholism**

The most accepted definition of alcoholism is by Keller and Efron. They define alcoholism as 'a chronic illness, psychic, somatic or psychosomatic, which manifests itself as a disorder of behaviour'. It is characterized by the repeated drinking of alcoholic beverages, to an extent that exceeds customary, dietary use or compliance with the social customs of the community and that interferes with the drinker's health or the social or economic functioning.

There is a difference between an alcoholic and a social drinker. Marty Mann defines an alcoholic as one whose drinking causes continuing problems in one or more areas of his life.

A social drinker is one who drinks the way his social group permits. Drinking alcohol does not cause him any problems in his life.

## **Stages of Alcoholism**

### **Early Stage**

- *Increased tolerance*: The person needs more alcohol to produce the desired effect.
- *Black out*: A complete loss of memory for a period of time, while functioning physically and mentally in an otherwise normal fashion.

- *Preoccupation with drinking:* The person is always thinking about the next drink.
- Avoiding any talk about drinking.

### **Middle Stage**

- *Loss of control:* The person cannot control the amount of alcohol, the place of drinking, and the time of drinking.
- *Justifying drinking:* The person finds new excuses for his drinking  
Aggression: Since he believes that others are the cause for his problems, he begins to abuse them verbally and physically.
- *Grandiose behaviour:* To protect his self-esteem and hide his guilt begins to show off by spending lavishly on his friends and family.
- *Changing drinking patterns:* This is to show that he can control his drinking. The person may change the kind of drinks; the place or he may even abstain from drinking for some time.
- *Chain drinking:* In order to keep the blood alcohol level constant, starts drinking continuously to prevent withdrawal symptoms.

### **Chronic Stage**

- *Binge drinking:* Bouts of continuous drinking for days together followed by total abstinence for a short period.
- *Paranoia:* The person becomes suspicious of everyone. He feels that someone is plotting to kill him.

### **Tobacco**

*Brief history:* British explorer Walter Raleigh popularized tobacco in the west in and from there the widespread of tobacco spread to the rest of the world. He saw how the natives chopped dried and smoked tobacco in pipes for pleasure.

*What is tobacco?* Tobacco contains one of the most powerful poisons known to humans, Nicotine. Nicotine in pure form can kill humans in a minute. Cigarette smoke is absorbed into the blood stream because, the smoke is alkaline, so dissolves in saliva in the mouth and from there into the blood stream and finally to the brain.

Nicotine is physically and mentally addictive. Nicotine is more addictive than heroine. It kills more people than any other illegal drug. “Over 40% of the heart patients are smokers” reveals a study conducted on 5000 patients at Wockhardt Hospitals, India in 2004. “Smoking including exposure to second hand smoking, makes heart work harder by decreasing the oxygen carried in the blood since carbon monoxide and other gases replace oxygen with each smoke”.

The report of the Surgeon General of the US released in 2004 says that more illness than previously known is linked to smoking. The diseases include cataracts, pneumonia, cancers of stomach, pancreas, kidney and cervix. Nicotine found in the breast milk and babies exposed to second hand smoke are twice as likely to be victims of sudden infant death syndrome. Women who smoke



shorten their lives by an average 14.5 years and the average loss for male smokers is 13.2 years. The report of the British Medical Association 2004 stated that it has recorded the cause of impotency of 120,000 young men as nicotine. The cause of low birth weight of babies is also related to nicotine intake of the parents. Women who smoke take longer to conceive than those who do not, and chances of conceiving at all are reduced by between 10-40%.

### **Drug Deception**

*Drug trade is illegal:* There can be a terrible amount of cheating and deception, which may lead to swindling and murder. There is also the danger of unexpected or toxic effects that may result from some of the following deceptive practices:

- a) **Dilution:** This is done by adding inactive substances to increase the quantity. The result is reduction of weight. The process is also called cut. Materials used for dilution are atta, sugar, chalk powder etc.
- b) **Adulteration:** This involves cutting the drugs with an active ingredient. Rat poison may be added to heroin and barbiturates may be added to cocaine.
- c) **Substitution:** This is plain cheating, by selling one chemical in the name of another costly one, e.g. synthetic heroin as pure heroin.

### **Target Groups**

Research shows that drug use among children is ten times more than parents suspect. In addition, many students know that their parents do not recognize the extent of drug use, and this leads them to believe that they can use drugs with impunity (US Department of Education).

Even in India drugs have entered the school campus. A decade ago drug abuse was a problem of the affluent West. Today it is spreading to developing countries, which account for 20 percent of the world's addicts. Almost all the metropolitan cities have many drug addicts in schools, colleges and the other educational institutions. The North Eastern states of India are notorious for drug abuse and trafficking.

Most drug users begin taking drugs at an early age, as adolescents or even earlier. Influence of friends [peer] is the deciding factor. Drug use is a school problem because it undermines a student's academic ability. This results in very high rate of drop-out from schools.

Drugs disrupt the entire school. They affect the moral character of the students. In addition, drug uses brings into the school environment the illegal activities connected to drug use, drug trade, theft, crime, and even prostitution.

The groups who are more vulnerable to drug abuse are:

- 1) **Street children:** India has the largest number of street children. They earn their livelihood by rag-picking, shoe shining, working in small industries and shops. Common drugs used by children are tobacco, brown sugar, crude alcohol, cannabis, gasoline, glue, paint, thinner and kerosene (sniffing). Some of them use hard drugs and end up as intravenous drug addicts.

One of the studies recently conducted found that 75 per cent of the children interviewed consumed alcohol on a regular basis. About 2 per cent take it daily. Elders and the gangs use these children, to operate as peddlers.

- 2) **Workers:** Another group highly vulnerable to addiction is the labour class. This includes long distance truck drivers, daily wage earners, particularly the migrant labours who stay away from their homes. The effect of drugs on this group is much more than one may imagine. This habit may lead to sloppy workmanship, loss of productivity, traffic accidents and health care costs.
- 3) **Sports personnel:** There are certain chemicals that can improve the performance of the athletes. China and erstwhile East Germany admitted to have had used such drugs in the training of their sports personnel. Use of some of these drugs may not become a habit. But they have severe side effects as far as the health of the individual is concerned. Some of the athletes use stimulants like cocaine to boost up their performance.



- 4) **Artists:** Creativity and mood changing drugs have been closely connected. Music, arts and poetry are creative fields. In a recent study of 12 to 17 year olds conducted for Columbia's Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 76 percent said that the entertainment industry encourages illegal drug use. Drug epidemic was fuelled through popular culture, especially rock music. A few of the popular rock stars glamorize drug use.

Some of the well-known writers and poets were under the influence of the chemicals. They have been using the mind-altering property of the drugs to add creativity to their works.

- 5) Persons engaged in routine and monotonous work. This group include drivers, law enforcing authorities, defence personnel etc. As their job demands a lot of physical strain in some cases use of alcohol has become part of their way of functioning, and in some cases they become dependent on drugs.

Going through these various groups we find that they all use drugs for different reasons. It goes to prove that drug abuse has no one single cause, nor is it related to one class or kind of people.

### Check Your Progress II

**Note:** Space is given below for your answer.

1) What are some of the theories related to drug abuse?

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## 2.5 MYTHS RELATED TO DRUGS AND DRUG ABUSE

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Myths are what is popularly believed but in fact are false. The general public has not properly understood drugs and their effects. Many people become addicts due to false notions related to drugs. Let us discuss some of them here:

1) **Only weak individuals become addicts.** The fact is that the reverse is true: addicts become weak individuals. No one starts using drugs to become addicts. As we saw earlier, people begin to abuse drugs for different reasons. Even at that stage an addict has strong willpower when it comes to getting the supply of drugs. An addict will take any risk to maintain his drug habit.

Besides, the strength of the will depends on motivation. Motivation depends on priority. For the addict the number one priority is the chemical, because it solves all his problems. Thus, the addict chooses to get the chemicals more than any other thing to satisfy his/her needs.

2) **Drugs give mental and physical strength.** Drugs can change the reasoning capacity of the individual. So, he will be ready to do things which he was not capable of doing without the influence of the drugs. Secondly the strength that one gets is only a short-term measure. Drugs also help a person to overcome inhibitions, and fears and make him look like a courageous person.

3) **Recreational use of drugs is not harmful.** All illegal drugs are harmful. They cause physical and psychological changes in the user. Prolonged drug use leads to addiction. Besides all drugs are expensive. They make the user poor physically and financially. It also encourages drug trafficking.

4) **Everybody is taking drugs.** The fact is that this is an argument used by

those who use drugs to gain acceptability for their behaviour. Even if there are many people using drugs the majority of the people do not use drugs. Peer pressure is difficult to cope with and it takes more courage and strength to stand up to what is right and to resist drugs. Everybody is not using drugs.

- 5) ***Drugs help to forget failures and painful events of life.*** The fact is that it helps you forget only as long as the effect of the chemical lasts, for one to three hours. It works only for the time being. It is like burying problems alive; the ghost will come back to haunt you the next day.
- 6) ***Drugs help to keep peer group status.*** The fact is that the peer group has no status all those who drink are drinking because they cannot stop drinking. They want to stop but cannot. The status the peer group pretends to have is unreal and unhealthy.
- 7) ***Drugs improve your concentration.*** The fact is that it is feasting on borrowed money. Drugs can increase mental performance, but they certainly kill the brain cells in the long run. Students and individuals who need longer periods of work or study use drugs. But many of them get addicted to them, and in the long run, they die very young. Poet Byron was a brilliant poet, but an alcoholic who died in his twenties.

Therefore, one needs to be very careful in responding to all types of talks which go around regarding the use of drugs.

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## 2.6 LET US SUM UP

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The aim of this unit is to familiarize you with the facts of drug abuse. You are now able to distinguish between use and abuse of drugs. You can discuss why different people abuse drugs for different reasons. You are able to distinguish between different kinds of drugs and how they affect the functioning of the various parts of our body. You also understand that drugs can be manufactured in different ways. You realize that there are many legal implications of drug abuse. Different kinds of drugs are abused by different kinds of people. We talked of wrong ideas that people have about the effect of drugs in their lives. Finally, we discussed certain myths related to drug abuse. Drugs are abused because of the wrong notion they have about their effect on the body and mind.

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## 2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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