

Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention For High School

Curriculum Guide

Recommended Grade Level 9-12 **Total Time** 30-45 minutes **Subject Fit** Health
Standards Alignment National Health Education Standards (NHES)

With prescription drug misuse and abuse becoming a national issue, it is more important than ever to empower our students with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to prevent its worsening spread. By modeling and reinforcing positive behavior, our Prescription Drugs: Misuse and Abuse Prevention course blends expert-vetted content with engaging digital activity. The outcome is the first online prevention program of its kind, teaching students how to differentiate between various prescription drugs, describe the science of addiction, and demonstrate effective refusal strategies.

Each of the 6 evidence-based lessons scaffolds students' knowledge, building a comprehensive solution that addresses prescription drug usage from multiple pathways. Interactive scenarios and digital stories allow students to transform knowledge into action, supporting virtual peers and navigating the road to safe and healthy outcomes.

Each lesson contains a pre- and post-assessment to measure knowledge gain throughout. Additionally, students complete a survey at the start and end of the course, as well as after a 7-day intersession period in order to evaluate attitudinal and behavioral change.

Topic Areas

1. Prescription drug basics (opioids, stimulants, and depressants)
2. Addiction and the brain
3. Labels, storage, and disposal
4. Safe use, misuse, and abuse
5. Refusal skills
6. Supporting others

Course Structure

Each segment is ~5-10 minutes.



Key Learning Objectives

After taking this course, students will exhibit the following knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors:

Knowledge (Students will be able to...)

- Identify and classify the three major categories of prescription drugs (opioids, stimulants, depressants)
- Describe the purposes, functions, and side effects of various prescription drugs
- Understand the risks of misusing, abusing, and sharing prescription drugs
- Interpret prescription labels
- Recognize signs of drug abuse and overdose
- Describe physical, mental, social, and legal consequences of abusing prescription drugs

Attitudes (Students will agree that...)

- Prescription drugs can positively impact people's lives when used appropriately and as prescribed
- Sharing medication may cause you or someone else harm
- Even though prescription drugs are "legal," they can be as dangerous as illicit drugs
- Anyone who takes prescription drugs, even once, can become addicted
- Everyone has a responsibility to step in if a friend has a problem
- It's never too late to get help if experiencing a problem with drugs

Behaviors (Students will...)

- Use prescription drugs only as advised by a medical professional
- Not share prescription drugs with others
- Not take prescription drugs with other substances without talking to a doctor
- Provide assistance to a friend who may be experiencing a problem with prescription drugs
- Store and dispose of medications appropriately

Detailed Course Outline:

Lesson 1: The Basics

Students are introduced to the course, take Survey 1, and explore the three main categories of prescription drugs (opioids, stimulants and depressants), how each works, and possible side effects.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the common "street" and brand names
- Describe the positive effects on those with valid need and prescription (but careful not to promote misuse)
- Describe the potential negative effects (body and brain) if abused or misused
- Describe the possible legal consequences associated with misuse (e.g. giving to a friend, or using without a prescription, selling)

Activity Topic	Activity Description
Introduction	Students are introduced to the course and their portfolio, where they can find additional resources.
The Facts	Students learn about misuse and abuse and are reminded that most people do not misuse or abuse prescription drugs.
Drug Categories	Students learn about the different types of prescription drugs they will be exploring in the course: opioids, stimulants, and depressants.
Basic Facts About Opioids	Students explore: medical use, how it works, additional possible side effects, potential for dependence and addiction, and brand names and street names.
Basic Facts about Depressants	Students explore: medical use, how it works, additional possible side effects, potential for dependence and addiction, and brand names and street names.
Basic Facts about Stimulants	Students explore: medical use, how it works, additional possible side effects, potential for dependence and addiction, and brand names and street names.
Legal Risks and Consequences	Students learn the basics about prescription drug-related laws, including the consequences of driving under the influence of prescription drugs.

Lesson 2: Science of Addiction

Students learn how addiction affects the brain and explore interactive journal entries to hear how some students recovered from addiction.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain that anyone can become addicted to prescription drugs
- Describe how drugs impact the brain and can lead to addiction problems
- Define terms, such as “withdrawal” and “tolerance” and relationships to addiction
- Describe how many addicts can manage their addictions and try to find recovery in a supportive environment

Activity Topic	Activity Description
Introduction	Students learn about the basics of addiction.
Principles of Addiction	Students explore the effects of addiction on the brain.
Student Stories	Students listen to three student stories and reflect on the different forms addiction can take.
Support and Recovery	Students learn about the process of recovery.

Lesson 3: Understanding Prescriptions

Students explore a prescription label, learning about the different components and answering questions about the instructions. Students also learn of safe ways to dispose of unused medications.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain the importance of always following instructions precisely (e.g., when to take it, how to take it, and when not to take it)
- Describe the factors that doctors consider when writing prescriptions (weight, age, history, medical conditions, allergies, potential interactions, etc.)
- Read and understand prescription labels, including caution or risk statements
- Store and dispose of unused drugs safely and appropriately

Activity Topic	Activity Description
Introduction	Students reflect on the importance of following a doctor's prescription instructions.
Reading Prescription Labels 1	Students explore following information on a prescription label: patient name, drug name and strength, directions, and refills.
Case Study 1	Students answer a question about how Ashley should follow prescription instructions.
Case Study 2	Students answer a question about how Ashley should follow prescription instructions.
Reading Prescription Labels 2	Students explore following information on a prescription label: warnings, interactions, and pharmacy information.
Case Study 3	Students answer a question about how Ashley should follow prescription instructions.
Case Study 4	Students answer a question about how Ashley should follow prescription instructions.
Reading Prescription Labels 3	Students explore following information on a prescription label: expiration/disposal date, physical description of pill, pill manufacturer/distributor, and legal notices.
Case Study 5	Students answer a question about how Ashley should follow prescription instructions.

continued on next page

Activity Topic	Activity Description
Case Study 6	Students answer a question about how Ashley should follow prescription instructions.
Proper Storage and Disposal	Students learn about what to do with leftover medications.
Proper Storage	Students learn about how to properly store leftover medications.
Proper Disposal	Students learn about how to properly dispose of leftover medications.

Lesson 4: Safe Use

Several interactive scenarios are presented to students, who must help characters make smart choices regarding prescription drug use.

Learning Objectives

- Explain why taking a depressant with another depressant, such as alcohol, is dangerous
- Explain why taking more pain medication, or taking it more frequently than directed, is unsafe
- Understanding that misusing prescription drugs even once is not safe

Activity Topic	Activity Description
Using Drugs Safely	Students are introduced to several scenarios where they will help characters make smart choices throughout the lesson.
Case Study 1: Veronica Meets the Parents	Scenario: Veronica takes a Xanax and deliberates whether to drink wine with dinner.
Case Study 2: Anik's Personal Prescription	Scenario: Anik has leftover painkillers from knee surgery, and must decide whether to take some of the leftovers for his hurt toe.
Case Study 3: Li's Painkillers	Scenario: Li is prescribed painkillers, but doesn't want to use them because he's afraid of getting addicted.

Lesson 5: Refusal Skills

Students learn how to refuse unprescribed prescription drugs through interactive scenarios in which they see the outcomes of their choices.

Learning Objectives:

- Articulate that most students do not misuse prescription drugs and would support a friend's decision not to use drugs
- Resist peer pressure and other influences to not take prescription drugs outside of a professional's advice
- Not be swayed by peer pressure and other influences to take prescription drugs outside of a medical professional's advice
- Step in to support a friend who is being pressured into using drugs or selling or giving their pills to someone else
- Describe the potential side effects of taking prescription drugs outside of a doctor's prescription

Activity Topic	Activity Description
Reasons for Misuse	Students learn some common reasons people misuse prescription drugs.
Refusal Strategies, pt. 1	Students explore a common scenario in which prescription drugs are in use and identify effective refusal strategies.
Responding to Pressure	Students explain different types of pressure, such as indirect and internal.
Refusal Strategies, pt. 2	Students explore additional strategies for refusing when others ask for prescription drugs.
The Big Idea	Students learn why it's important to not share prescription drugs with others.
Making Choices	Students are reminded of the power they have to make smart choices.

Lesson 6: Supporting a friend (Bystander Skills)

Students recognize warning signs of a friend in trouble, and take concrete steps to help and support them. Students also respond to a situation involving an overdose and review the most important takeaways from the course.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize the signs of prescription drug misuse and addiction
- Resist barriers to action (e.g., thinking it will harm the relationship)
- Seek assistance if the student him/herself is experiencing a problem with prescription drugs (including preemptive study skills counseling, medical professionals, mental health professionals, etc.)
- Identify signs of a prescription drug overdose
- Use various skills to care for a friend in a potential overdose situation and to call for help (911)

Activity Topic	Activity Description
Helping a Friend	Students are introduced to importance of helping a friend in need.
Being Aware	Students learn the 4-step process to stepping in: noticing a problem, deciding to act, determining what to do, support and recovery.
General Warning Signs	Students explore different warning signs for someone who might be abusing drugs.
Specific Signs of Abuse	Students further explore specific signs of abuse for opiates, depressants, and stimulants.
Responding to an Overdose	Students learn the definition of an overdose as well as information about key signs, getting help, and what to do while waiting for help to arrive.
Do I Need Help?	Students identify the list of signs indicating that you may need help regarding prescription drugs.
Getting Support	Students receive general information about how to get help.