

Chapter 22 Lesson 3: Psychoactive Drugs

Introduction:

In this lesson you learned about the health risks associated with psychoactive drugs. Categories of psychoactive drugs include stimulants (such as cocaine), depressants (such as GHB or Rohypnol), and hallucinogens (such as MDMA or Ecstasy). The American Council for Drug Education (ACDE) is an organization that seeks to educate the public about drugs and their dangers. Visit the ACDE's Web site to learn more about specific psychoactive drugs and their effects.

Links to Explore:

American Council for Drug Education: New Fact Sheets

<http://www.acde.org/common/Contents.htm>

Directions:

- Follow this link to the ACDE's main publications page:
 - Click on the links for the following fact sheets:
 - Cocaine/Crack
 - Ecstasy
 - GHB and Rohypnol
 - When you have read these fact sheets, answer the following questions:
1. In the context of illegal drug use, what is a "crash"?
 2. What are the potential psychiatric effects of cocaine or crack use?
 3. Ecstasy, or MDMA, can cause death through harmful overheating (hyperthermia), overstimulation of the nervous system, or a condition called hyponatremia. What is hyponatremia and how does it occur?
 4. What is herbal Ecstasy and how do its dangers compare with those of MDMA?
 5. How are GHB and Rohypnol involved in date rape?
 6. What are some of the symptoms of GHB or Rohypnol overdose?

Answers:

1. A "crash" is depression that sets in as the high from a drug wears off. It can leave the user feeling fatigued, jumpy, fearful, and anxious.
2. Psychosis, paranoia, depression, anxiety disorders, and delusions, as well as addiction.
3. Hyponatremia occurs when the user drinks too much at one time. The excess fluid intake swells the brain, resulting in coma and sometimes death.
4. Herbal ecstasy is another form of MDMA composed of either ephedrine (ma huang) and caffeine. It has many of the same qualities and effects as MDMA.

5. Slipping these drugs into a victim's drink can make the victim open to suggestion, physically weak, or unconscious. In addition, Rohypnol can cause the victim to black out, having no memory of the rape.
6. Symptoms of overdose can include intense drowsiness, unconsciousness or coma, muscle spasms, disorientation, vomiting, slowed or stopped breathing.

Additional Links to Explore:

Use the links below to gather additional information on the activity topic. When appropriate, have students extend their research to include important concepts contained in these Web sites.

Teen Drug Abuse

<http://www.teendrugabuse.us/>

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

<http://www.nida.nih.gov>