

Safer Choices: Week 5

Wednesday 20 May 2015 HARM REDUCTION

Your child will be doing the following:

- Finding out about the risks and harmful effects of taking drugs
- Learning about ways to reduce the harm and keep themselves and their friends safe

First... they will be told that there is no such thing as a safe drug: all drug taking carries risks.

Next... they will play a Russian Roulette probability game, to emphasise the essential fact that you can never be entirely sure what it is you're taking, how strong it is, or what it will do to you.

Then... they will read and discuss the following suggestions for trying to reduce potential harm for those that choose to take the risk. They will then work with a group to design a website or Facebook page which is about harm reduction. This will need to be eye-catching, full of information and advice, and most of all, appealing and relevant to young people. They will then be asked to present this to the class.

They could show this to you at home, or talk to you about it. Is there anything new they learned, or you learned?

HARM REDUCTION

Don't believe what your mates say - Your mates aren't chemists and the retailers often don't know what they are selling either - so read up on the internet, there are a number drug forums available detailing the effects of a number of substances, positive and negative.

Russian roulette - Many of these substances have not had research conducted on them or been tested; do you really want to be the lab rat??

Small is not a bad thing - The newer substances are often much more potent, therefore the amount required to obtain the same effect may be smaller than normal. It is best to start with a low dose and wait to see how you feel, don't overdo it or double dose, it may take time for the effects to kick in.

Avoid cocktails - Never mix substances together, as the effects of many of the newer substances are unknown.

Stay safe - Especially if you are prone to mental health problems, in a low mood, feeling anxious, depressed or are unwell physically. Avoid using substances in dangerous areas as many can reduce the pain threshold or create powerful hallucinations, so you could injure

yourself and not feel it.

Don't be alone - Ensure you don't use alone and are with company that you trust in case of any unwanted side effects. Always have a designated safe person who is aware of what substances people are taking; this information can be crucial in case of a medical emergency.

Stay healthy - Binges of substances can be dangerous so it is important to ensure that you rest your body and keep healthy during your 'rest' periods from substances.

Get help - It is extremely important to seek appropriate medical advice if you require it rather than waiting it out, as things could only get worse. The internet is not a doctor and neither are your friends, if in doubt get help!

Keep the packet - Remember to keep the packet of any ingested substances as this helps medical services identify what you have taken much more quickly and therefore you can receive the appropriate medical intervention should you require it.

Don't share - Be selfish with your paraphernalia, including straws or needles, as sharing may spread disease such as hepatitis C. If injecting legal highs, ensure to attend a needle exchange and adopt safer injecting techniques.

LEGAL HIGHS

GAME OVER!

#legalhighsgameover
www.legalhighsgameover.com

HARM REDUCTION ADVICE

KNOW YOUR STUFF
Your mates probably aren't chemists, so read about it first!

RUSSIAN ROULETTE
Most legal highs haven't been tested so don't be the first to try it.

IT'S NOT A COCKTAIL
Don't mix substances together especially with alcohol.

BE SELFISH
Don't share paraphernalia, it spreads disease.

KEEP THE PACKET
If something is to happen, this will give the medical team an idea of what you have taken.

GET HELP
Don't wait for something to happen, get medical help if you need it.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE
Use when you're with friends, not when you are alone to ensure safety.

SMALL IS SAFER
Start with small amounts. Start safely.

IF IN DOUBT... DON'T DO IT.

CREW

warning signs

If you or your mates take drugs regularly or over a long period, look out for signs that suggest the drug use is becoming a problem.

Such as:

- losing interest in things you used to enjoy
- things not going so well at home
- not being able to concentrate
- skipping school, college or work
- not caring how you look
- feeling depressed
- feeling jittery
- becoming a drug bore
- losing touch with your true friends
- only going out somewhere if there's a chance you will score drugs

safety

You are at risk when you are on drugs:

- **being reckless** - some drugs can make you feel invincible, putting yourself or others at risk of injury.
- **making bad decisions** - some drugs can cloud your judgement so you might do something you regret.
- **being attacked** - make sure your drinks aren't tampered with so you're not at risk of drug-assisted sexual assault.
- **getting in with the wrong crowd** - you might end up getting involved in crime.