



Effects of Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking



LO: Describe the effects of drugs, alcohol and smoking on health and behaviour including the effects on pregnancy.

Drugs

A drug is a substance that has an effect on the body:

- medicines are drugs that help people suffering from pain or disease
- recreational drugs are taken by people because they like the effects they have on their bodies, e.g. alcohol (ethanol) and tobacco.

Effects of drugs:

Stimulants: Speed up messages in the brain and along the nerves, making you feel more alert.

Legal = nicotine and caffeine make you feel more energetic and alert.

Illegal = Cocaine, ecstasy and amphetamines. These carry more severe risks than legal stimulants.

Depressants: slows down messages in the brain and along the nerves, e.g. Alcohol (ethanol), heroin and solvents.

Short term effects	Long term effects
Feeling happy	Liver, brain and heart damage
Lowers inhibition	Alcohol - weight gain and damage to foetus
Slowed thinking and muscle activity	Solvents - rash around mouth and nose
Hallucinations	Loss of memory and increased risk of mental illness.

Drug addiction:

If your body gets used to the changes by a drug then you may become dependent and need to keep taking it to feel normal, this is addiction. When you try to stop taking it you may suffer from withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, anxiety and sweating.

Effects of alcohol:

Drinking large amounts of alcohol over a long time can cause stomach ulcers heart disease and brain and liver damage.

Your liver breaks down harmful chemicals into harmless waste products. The livers of heavy drinkers can become scarred (cirrhosis of the liver) (see right) and can cause death.



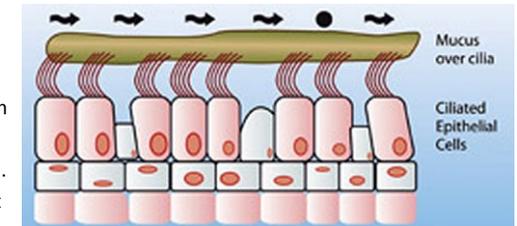
During Pregnancy:

Drinking alcohol: increases the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight babies. Alcohol can also cause Foetal Alcohol Syndrome which affects brain development and can cause learning difficulties and weakened immune systems.

Smoking: as well above; increased risk of cot death, and babies with respiratory illness.

Effects of smoking:

Tobacco contains over 4000 chemicals including tar (a sticky substance that irritates and narrows airways), nicotine (a highly addictive stimulant drug) and carbon monoxide (a poisonous gas that reduces the amount of oxygen the blood can carry). These chemicals all cause smokers to be at higher risk of breathing problems, cancer, heart attacks and strokes. Most smokers also die younger than their non-smoking peers.



Heart disease - arteries become blocked which prevents blood flow.

Emphysema - alveoli in your lungs are affected, their walls become weaker so don't inflate properly and may also burst during coughing. This reduces the amount of oxygen available.

Respiratory illness - the respiratory system has cilia (hair like cells) that sweep away mucus that has trapped dust and microorganisms, keeping your airways clean. When the chemicals in tobacco stop cilia working the mucus builds up making it harder to breath and more prone to infections.