



SAFER DRUG USE

A HARM REDUCTION GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Harm Reduction.....	3
2. Alcohol.....	4
3. Marijuana.....	5
4. Tobacco/ Vape.....	6
5. Cocaine.....	7
6. Hallucinogens.....	8
7. MDMA (Ecstasy/Molly).....	9
8. Prescription Drugs.....	10
9. RX Stimulants.....	11
10. RX Depressants.....	12
11. Opioid Overdose Prevention.....	13
12. Substance Misuse.....	14
13. The 3 D's of Bystander Intervention.....	15
14. Resources.....	16
15. Special Thanks.....	17



HARM REDUCTION



What is Harm Reduction?

Harm Reduction (HR) is a set of policies and practices intended to reduce the harmful effects of drug and alcohol use. HR acknowledges that many people will continue to use drugs and engage in risky behaviors despite prevention efforts. It also accepts that many people are unwilling or unable to seek treatment. While some people who use substances may not necessarily require treatment, it is helpful for them to be aware of resources that can help minimize harm from drug use. This HR guide will provide readers with a basic understanding of the most commonly utilized drugs amongst college students, along with protective behaviors they can take to reduce harmful effects.

Mixing Drugs

Most fatal overdoses are the result of mixing drugs. When drugs are mixed the risk substantially increases. Drugs typically use different mechanisms in the body to create sedation.

Harm Reduction Tips

- Use one drug at a time, or use less of each drug
- Reduce the amount of every drug being taken
- Try to avoid mixing alcohol with pills - that is an incredibly dangerous combination
- Have a friend with you who knows the drugs you've taken and can respond in case of an emergency

Drug users
need support,
not stigma

There is no
recovery
from a fatal
overdose

Meet
people where
they are



ALCOHOL



What is alcohol?

Alcohol is a drug that acts as a depressant to the central nervous system. Users like to drink alcohol help them relax, feel confident, or forget about stressors they may be experiencing. More people die of alcohol-related accidents and diseases than any other drugs combined. It is important to follow protective behaviors to prevent harm from use.

Tips for Safer Drinking Include:

- Drink plenty of water to keep hydrated throughout the day
- Eat a big meal full of whole grains, protein, and carbohydrates
- Plan out how many drinks you're going to have and stick to it
- Space your drinks out, limit one to two drinks per hour and drink a cup of water with every drink. Remember what one standard drink is:

- 12 oz. Beer
- 5–6 oz. Wine
- 1.5 oz. Liquor



- Have a designated driver, or plan an alternative way home
- When drinking, avoid mixing drugs because it can stress your heart and liver and can lead to overdose
- Drink in a safe place, somewhere you feel more in control of your surroundings
- Assess if you are satisfied with your current drinking practices and modify as you see fit. Seek support or professional help if needed.
- Reduce the number of days you drink per week or month

Use [this calculator](#) to know how long it would take for alcohol to leave your system based on your weight and alcohol intake.





MARIJUANA



What is Marijuana?

Marijuana- also called weed, herb, pot, grass, bud, ganja, Mary Jane, and a vast number of other slang terms is a greenish-gray mixture of the dried flowers of Cannabis sativa. Once consumed, THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana that causes people to feel high, can cause lasting effects from 2-10 hours depending on consumption method and other factors. Harm Reduction for Marijuana is designed to promote safety, health, and well-being and informed decision-making regarding its use.

Tips of Methods Recommended for Lowering the Risk of Marijuana Use:

- Minimize respiratory problems by not smoking marijuana mixed with tobacco products
- Avoid deep inhalations
- Do not combine marijuana with other drugs
- Avoid driving when you are high; it may take one to three hours for short-term effects to taper off
- Minimize lip contact with other users to avoid infections or viruses
- Eating edibles instead of smoking may be better for your lungs, but be sure to take a bite at a time and wait at least half an hour in between bites to avoid overconsumption
- Try CBD instead of THC for medicinal properties without the high





What is Tobacco / Nicotine?

Tobacco is a dried plant for smoking and chewing, which contains nicotine, a stimulant drug that can lead to addiction. Many people find it difficult to quit smoking or vaping. A harm reduction approach to tobacco control encourages smokers who are unable to stop smoking on their own to switch to a less harmful form of nicotine, which ideally would result in them reducing or quitting nicotine use altogether.

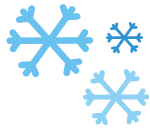
Harm reduction Associated with Tobacco / Nicotine Use

- Cutting down on smoking or vaping
- Switching to smokeless tobacco products
- Switching to non-combustible organic or additive-free tobacco products
- Switching to non-tobacco nicotine-containing products, such as pharmaceutical nicotine replacement therapies (NRT)

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As a friendly reminder, smoking or vaping tobacco, nicotine, marijuana, or any other drug at San Francisco State University is prohibited. In order to provide the California State University's faculty, staff, students, guests, and the public with campuses that support the principle of one's individual freedom to learn, teach, work, think, and take part in their intellectual endeavors in a fulfilling, rewarding, safe and healthy environment, the creation and implementation of a system-wide "smoke and tobacco-free" policy was established.





COCAINE



What is Cocaine?

Cocaine is an addictive stimulant drug made from coca leaves. For some people, cocaine energizes and helps them perform simple, physical, and mental tasks quickly, though others experience the opposite effect. Cocaine's effects appear almost immediately and disappear within a few minutes to an hour. Stimulant harm reduction efforts are aimed at meeting users where they are, providing education on drug use, and preventing harm associated with stimulant use.

Tips for Reducing Harm when Using Cocaine

- Eat a meal and hydrate before you use cocaine. The drug can decrease appetite, which can lead to weight loss and nutrient deficiency.
- Decide how much you plan to use and stick to it. Avoid re-dosing.
- Pipes and straws can have tiny bits of blood on them, which transmit disease. Avoid sharing equipment.
- Switch of nostrils in between use when snorting cocaine. It can cause damage to the delicate nasal tissue inside the nose. It is also recommended to flush the nose with lukewarm water to decrease nosebleeds.
- Stay in a cool room with good ventilation. Stimulants can cause body temperature to increase.
- Know the overdose signs: blue or extremely pale face, difficulty breathing, vomiting, foaming at the mouth, seizure, chest pain, and unconsciousness, and seek help if they arise.





HALLUCINOGENS



What are Shrooms?

Psilocybin, otherwise known as magic mushrooms, comes from certain types of mushrooms found in tropical and subtropical regions of North and South America. The effects kick in fifteen to thirty minutes after ingesting and typically last between four and six hours, though some people may feel effects a lot longer. The effects include intensified feelings, changes in perception of time, spiritual experiences, and feelings of relaxation or detachment from self/environment.

What is LSD / ACID?

LSD, also known as acid, is one of the most powerful mind-altering chemicals. It is a clear or white odorless material made from lysergic acid, which is found in a fungus that grows on rye and other grains. This hallucinogenic drug can cause stimulating, pleasurable, and mind-altering experiences referred to as a "good trip" or it can lead to an unpleasant, experience referred to as a "bad trip."

Tips For Reducing Harm When Using Hallucinogens

- A good headspace is important. Take into consideration your past and present mental and emotional wellness and health.
- Have a sober buddy, someone who has experience with the drug, or who can seek help if needed. Be sure to use it in a safe environment.
- Stick to one drug at a time, don't mix with alcohol or other drugs.
- Do not drive, avoid operating any vehicles or dangerous objects.
- Avoid looking at yourself in the mirror. You may see things you don't like.
- If you are having a bad trip, remind yourself that it is temporary.
- Don't overdo it. It takes some people a long time than others to feel the effects of a drug. If you aren't feeling them, avoid taking more and wait.



MDMA (ECSTASY/MOLLY)

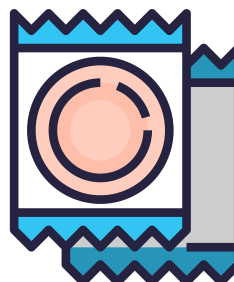
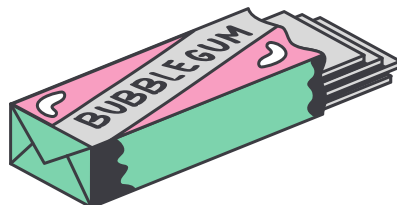


What is MDMA?

MDMA is a synthetic drug that alters mood and perception by producing feelings of increased energy, pleasure, emotional warmth, and distorted sensory and time perception. MDMA's effects last about three to six hours. MDMA harm reduction aims to prevent harms associated with ecstasy use, which can include jaw clenching, anxiety, and depression post use.

Tips to Reduce the Harm Caused by MDMA Use

- Avoid taking with other substances.
- Hydration is important, but not too much as some can develop hyponatremia, a condition from overconsumption of water and low sodium levels that can be fatal.
- Have a friend to talk to if you feel anxious, depressed, or other negative emotions.
- Reducing the amount of MDMA you consume in one session.
- Plan how much you're going to have and stick to it.
- Use a test kit to determine the purity of your MDMA.
- Have gum available in case jaw and teeth clenching occurs.
- Have condoms or dental dams in case you decide to participate in any sexual activity to reduce infections and diseases from transmitting.





PRESCRIPTION DRUGS



What are Prescription Drugs?

Prescription drugs are generally more potent than over-the-counter drugs and have more serious side effects if misused. They are prescribed to treat and control medical conditions and should be utilized as prescribed by a medical professional.

Most prescription drugs come in tablet, capsule, or liquid form, which a person takes by mouth. Misuse of prescription drugs means:

- Taking medicine in a way or dose other than prescribed
- Taking someone else's medicine
- Taking medicine only for the effect it causes- to get high

What are Prescription Stimulants?

Prescription stimulants are generally used to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy-uncontrollable episodes of deep sleep. They increase alertness, attention, and energy.

What are Prescription Depressants?

Depressants include sedatives, tranquilizers, and hypnotics. These drugs can slow brain activity, making them useful for treating anxiety, panic, acute stress reaction, and sleep disorders. Central Nervous System depressants cause drowsiness; sedatives are often prescribed to treat sleep disorders like insomnia. Hypnotics can induce sleep, whereas tranquilizers are prescribed to treat anxiety or relieve muscle spasms.





RX STIMULANTS



What is Adderall?

Adderall is a stimulant prescription medication that consists of two drugs: amphetamine and dextroamphetamine. It's commonly used to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). It's also used to treat narcolepsy. Adderall is safe to use in the long term when taking doctor-recommended dosages. When Adderall is misused, long-term use can lead to physical and psychological dependence.

Adderall Safer Use

- Eat food before taking Adderall
- Have magnesium before and after
- Drink plenty of water
- Aim to eat sugary snacks every 30 minutes since it helps maintain blood glucose levels
- Have some Vitamin C and Melatonin after to help reduce the effects of Adderall, making it easier to sleep

Prescription stimulants are commonly misused to hyper-focus on assignments, cram for an exam, or stay up for long periods of time. However, there is no evidence suggesting this method of studying actually improves reading comprehension or retention. It is much healthier to get a full eight hours of sleep and distribute studying throughout a longer period of time.





RX DEPRESSANTS



What is Xanax?

Xanax is a benzodiazepine. It is a prescription medicine used to treat anxiety disorder, anxiety caused by depression, and panic disorders. People misuse this drug for pleasure, such as lightheadedness, distorted sense of reality, a feeling of detachment, emotional numbness, and a sexual inclination. The drug's effects last about six hours. Dependence on Xanax can occur in just a few weeks.

Xanax Safer Use

- Take in small amounts
- Do not mix with any other drugs, especially alcohol
- Have a friend with you in case of an overdose



What is Codeine?

Codeine, also known as cough syrup, schoolboy, coties, and t-three's, is an opioid that is a prescription pain medication used to treat mild to moderate pain.

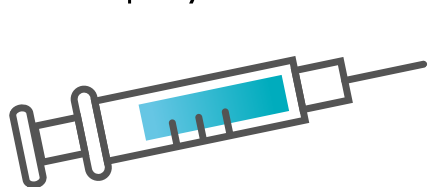
Codeine Safer Use

- Drink in small amounts
- Avoid mixing with any drugs and alcohol
- Have a friend with you in case of an overdose
- Call 911 or the Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222)
- Naloxone can be used as a counteractive to codeine overdose

OPIOID OVERDOSE PREVENTION

What is Naloxone (Narcan)?

Naloxone, also known as Narcan, is a medication called an “opioid antagonist” used to counter the effects of opioid overdose, for example, morphine and heroin overdose. Specifically, naloxone is used in opioid overdoses to counteract life-threatening depression of the central nervous system and respiratory system, allowing an overdose victim to breathe normally. Naloxone is a non-addictive, prescription medication. Naloxone only works if a person has opioids in their system. Naloxone may be injected into the muscle, vein, or under the skin or sprayed into the nose.



What are Fentanyl Testing Strips?

Fentanyl testing strips, mainly used by people who inject opioids, are an off-label harm reduction approach to testing the presence or absence of fentanyl. Based on the testing strips results, people can choose to implement measures to reduce the risk of an opioid overdose. These reduced risk measures can include using less of the substance, giving slow or test shots, not using alone, and using a naloxone rescue kit nearby. Other unregulated drugs in pill or powder form can also be tested (i.e., cocaine, MDMA, ketamine, and other non-injectable drugs) but must be mixed with water before testing. Since fake pills may have fentanyl very unevenly mixed into them, crush the entire pill to be sure none is missed.



SUBSTANCE MISUSE



What is Substance Misuse?

Substance misuse is a pattern of repeated drug and alcohol use that impacts one's life in terms of health, relationships, and productivity.

Why is this Topic Important?

- The use of alcohol and drugs, including marijuana, molly/ecstasy (MDMA), cocaine, and other drugs, can greatly impair brain development and a person's ability to make sound decisions.
- It is significant to understand that young adults' biology and the environments they spend time in influence their risk for substance abuse. Some of these influences include parental use of alcohol and drugs, peer pressure, and coping with stress.
- Repeated use of alcohol and drugs may lead to addiction, which can play roles in unsafe sex, drunk driving, impaired memory, and even death

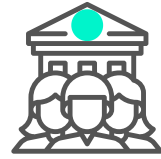
How Can We Prevent Addiction and Its Impacts?

- Moderate use
- Stay hydrated
- Avoid mixing alcohol with drugs
- Have a trustworthy designated driver
- Be with people you trust
- If engaging in sexual behavior while drunk or high, use safer sex supplies like condoms, lube, and dental dams
- Get tested for sexually transmitted infections
- Communicate with those around you about your current feelings, thoughts, and what your mind and body needs





THE 3 D'S OF



BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

Consent for any physical interaction is vital with or without the presence of substances. Although alcohol and drugs do not cause assault, they can be used as an excuse for perpetrators to make non-consensual sexual advances and other forms of sexual assaults towards other individuals. If you see anything funky going on, intervene if it is safe for you to do so.

Distract:

Anything that distracts someone enough to discontinue the abusive behavior

- Spill a drink
- Ask the abuser for directions
- Ask the victim to assist with a task
- Tell the abuser their car is being towed



Delegate:

If you do not feel comfortable or safe intervening, delegate the intervention to someone else.

- Tell a trusted professor
- Let a bouncer know about the abuse
- Ask the host of the party to intervene



Direct:

Directly address the abuse. You can either confront the potential victim, or the person you think is about to abuse.

- Ask the victim if they are OK
- Tell the abuser it isn't cool to talk to someone like that



RESOURCES



Counseling & Psychological Services

Provides support and a confidential space for students grappling with substance-related problems

Student Health Services

Offers low-cost nicotine replacement therapy at their pharmacy

Health Promotion & Wellness

Offers Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug workshops for classes, groups, or student organizations

Alcoholic Anonymous

Sober at SF State helps its members to "stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety." AA is a nonprofessional, self-supporting, and apolitical resource.

HIV Education and Prevention Project of Alameda County (HEPPAC)

Provides harm reduction-based services in Alameda County and Contra Costa County.

San Francisco AIDS Foundation

Provides free services and supplies that help manage health, prevent overdose, and stop HIV and hepatitis C transmission.

California Smokers Helpline

Free, confidential phone counseling and text message program to help you quit.

Harm Reduction Coalition

HRC holds space for and in support communities impacted by HIV, hepatitis C, and overdose, offering resources and training for local leaders to create solutions that work best for their community.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SAMHSA's National Helpline (800) 487-4889

SPECIAL THANKS



Special acknowledgment to Gabriela Martinez, who worked on this harm reduction guide through the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism as a Health Promotion & Wellness project. This guide embodies harm reduction to provide health education that meets students where they are at. Health Promotion & Wellness wishes you the best in your future endeavors and congratulations on graduating in the class of 2020.

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Health Promotion & Wellness does not endorse any substances' illegal use, and we recognize that abstaining is always the safest approach. However, we believe in providing accessible and accurate information to reduce the harm that can occur.

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Source for this guide:
National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institutes of Health;
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

HEALTH PROMOTION & WELLNESS

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