



LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

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P.L.U.S. Parent's Guide Lesson 3 Alcohol

This week we are talking about alcohol. Alcohol has become so accepted by our society that many of the students don't see alcohol as a dangerous drug. One of the ways children get this idea is through his/her observations. Children grow up with adults protecting them: "*Johnny, don't touch that stove, it's hot*" or "*Mary, hold my hand in the parking lot because you are too small for people to see you and I don't want you to get hurt.*" As our children grow up we constantly send them messages to "stay safe". When our children see us (adults) doing something, it is automatically interpreted as "safe" because mom and dad wouldn't do anything dangerous. How do they look at the use of alcohol? The problem with alcohol is that it is much more dangerous for youth than for adults.

ALCOHOL: We focus on understanding basic facts about alcohol and the harmful effects that can result from the use of alcohol products. We also stress that the use of alcohol by persons under the age of 21 is illegal. Alcohol, just like tobacco, is one of the "**Gateway Drugs**". A gateway drug is like a stepping-stone that often leads to other, stronger drug use. In fact, 80% of first time cocaine use happens while under the influence of alcohol.

Alcohol is a *depressant drug*, but it is often confused as a stimulant drug because of the goofy-type of things people do while under the influence. As with most depressant drugs, a state of stimulation (euphoria) occurs shortly before the sedation. If enough alcohol is put into the body, death can occur due to the brain becoming so depressed that it shuts down the body's involuntary functions (breathing and heart beating). Alcohol is the most abused drug in the country and can cause loss of coordination, trouble with other people, increase in violence, earlier sexual conduct, experimentation with harder drugs, lessen the ability to learn and remember, changes in personality, poor judgment, hangovers (result of poison in the body), accidents, throwing up, and death (to name a few). With youth these things happen quickly. *Did you know...?* 1/3 of teens who were monthly drinkers said that they typically drank to get drunk, and 65 percent said they had gotten drunk at least once during the past month. Further, about 1/3 of monthly drinkers who didn't intend to get drunk wound up getting intoxicated anyway, according to the 2009 Teen Survey released from The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA*) at Columbia University.

When alcohol and marijuana are mixed, a deadly brew is boiling. Marijuana is very effective at stopping the body from vomiting. The body's normal reaction to an overdose of alcohol, *alcohol poisoning*, is to throw-up and get rid of the poison. The potential for death from alcohol is significantly increased as marijuana stops the body's normal reaction to the alcohol poisoning.

When alcohol enters the blood one of the first organs affected is the liver. The liver filters contaminants out of the blood providing clean blood to the rest of the body. Alcohol is so

poisonous that when the liver detects any amount of alcohol nothing else will be filtered from the blood until all of the alcohol is gone. Whatever contaminants enter the blood, while alcohol is present, will travel unfiltered through the body. The question is: How long does it take the liver to filter *one drink* of alcohol out of the blood? One drink of alcohol is: 12 oz. beer, or 5 oz. wine, or 1½ oz. hard liquor, or 10 oz. wine cooler. On average it takes the liver 2 to 2.5 hours to filter one drink of alcohol. So, a person who has one (1) drink of alcohol will pump contaminated, dirty blood through the muscles, organs, brain, and every cell and tissue in the body for 2 to 2.5 hours. What if a person has three (3) drinks of alcohol? The liver will only process alcohol for 6 to 7.5 hours, and the body will be contaminated for longer. What if you have five (5) drinks of alcohol? The liver will only process alcohol for 10 to 12.5 hours and the body will be contaminated for longer. The *dirty blood* in conjunction with the alcohol traveling around the body is what causes the symptoms of a hangover. If one's liver cannot function properly due to alcohol consumption then "What is *reasonable use* of alcohol?"

We also explain that people who drink and use tobacco products are at higher risk for developing cancer. Since the liver is compromised, filtering the blood properly while alcohol is present allows the cancer causing chemicals from the tobacco smoke to circulate through the blood at higher levels. This is also true with people who drink and breathe in second-hand smoke.

TV commercials, movies, and television shows show alcohol use as fun, exciting and consequence free. These observations (*forms of learning*) by our children need to be balanced by discussion with you (mom and dad) about what's true, and what's entertainment versus a sales ploy. Our children need to constantly be reminded that life is really different than what we see on TV and in the movies or videos.

Student/Parent Homework (Week 3): Alcohol

Discuss with your child what you see as the dangers of youth alcohol use. Whether you drink or not, talk with your child about your views regarding his/her use of alcohol. Your child needs to have these discussions with you so they can complete the homework assignment, but even more importantly, your child needs to know what **your** views and expectations are regarding his/her alcohol use. Please take time to review what your child has written and sign the homework sheet.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Parent's Night: *Parent's Night* is open to any adult, parent, grandparent, relative or any person wishing to gain more information regarding the P.L.U.S. Program and/or timely drug information. We ask that children **do not** attend. *If you have no other choice and your child must attend we will separate them into a classroom where they will be supervised by one of the PLUS Officers. They can read, do homework or other quite activities.* If you cannot attend your schools *Parent's Night* please feel free to attend any that would fit your schedule. We certainly hope you can take the time to attend.

School	Date	Location	Time
Kirtland	TBA		7:00 - 9:00PM
St. Mary-Mentor	TBA		7:00 - 9:00PM