



SAFER DRUG USE

A HARM REDUCTION GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Harm Reduction	3
Alcohol	4
Marijuana	5
Tobacco/Vape	6
Cocaine	7
Hallucinogens	8
MDMA (Ecstasy/Molly)	9
Prescription Drugs	10
RX Stimulants	11
RX Depressants	12
Safer Injection Use	13
Safer Smoking Use	14
Safer Snorting Use	15
Opioid Overdose Prevention	16
Substance Misuse	17



Breckinridge County Harm Reduction Program

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

**Drug users
need support,
not stigma.**

**There is no
recovery
from 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 to 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 carbs.
- 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, which 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.





MARIJUANA



What is marijuana?

Marijuana—also called weed, herb, pot, grass, bud 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 1-3 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 30 minutes in between bites to avoid overconsumption.
- Try CBD instead of THC for medicinal properties without the high.



TOBACCO/VAPE

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 all together.

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.



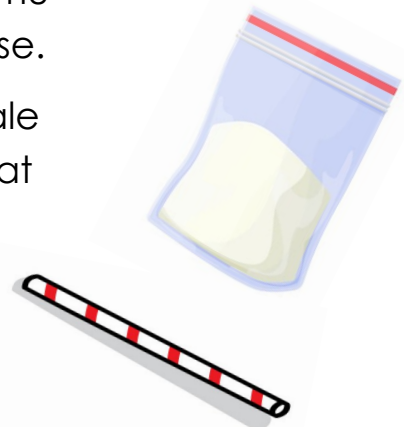
COCAINE

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 task quickly, through other 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 can transmit disease. Avoid sharing equipment.
- Switch nostrils in between use when snorting. It can cause damage to the delicate nasal tissue inside the nose. It is also recommended to flush the nose with warm water to decrease nosebleeds.
- Stay in a cool room with good ventilation. Stimulants can cause body temperature to increase.
- Know to overdose signs: blue or extremely pale face, difficulty breathing, vomiting, foaming at the mouth, seizure, chest pain, and unconsciousness. Seek help if signs 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 15-30 minutes after ingesting and typically last between 4-6 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 LCD/ACID?

LSD, also known as acid, is one of the most powerful mind-altering chemicals. It is a clear or white odorless material made of 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 head space 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 in a safe environment.
- Stick to one drug at a time, don't mix alcohol or other drugs.
- Do not drive, avoid operating any vehicles or dangerous objects.
- If you are having a bad trip, remind yourself that it is temporary.
- Do not overdo it. It takes some people a longer 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 3-6 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 Harm Caused by MDMA Use:

- Avoid taking other substances.
- Hydration is important, but not too much as some develop hyponatremia, a condition from overconsumption of water and low sodium levels can be fatal.
- Have a friend talk to you if you feel anxious, depressed, or other negative emotions.
- Reducing the amount of MDMA you consume in on 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 or 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 a tablet, capsule, or liquid form, which a person takes by mouth. Misuse means:

- Taking a medication 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 ADHD and narcolepsy. 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, 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 and 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 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 8 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, sure as lightheadedness, distorted sense of reality, a feeling of detachment, emotional numbness, and a sexual inclination. The drug effects last about 6 hours. Dependence on Xanax can occur in just a few weeks.

Safer Xanax 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, lean, is an opioid that is a prescription pain medication used to treat mild to moderate pain.

Safer Codeine 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.



SAFER INJECTION

1. Choose an injection site

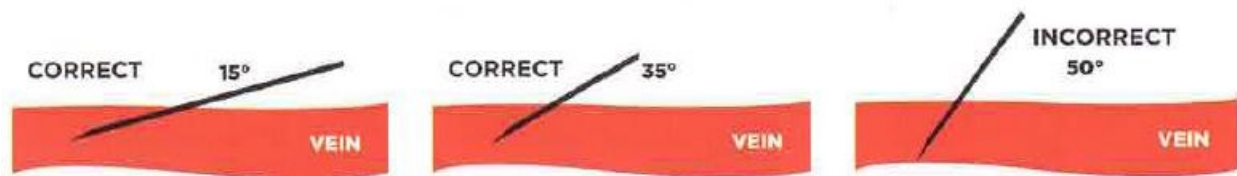
- Rotate injections sites when possible.
- Use an easily accessible vein in your arm if possible.
- Don't use tender, hardened or inflamed veins.
- The larger and more visible the vein, the easier it will be to inject.



2. Clean the site with an alcohol pad.

3. Tie off (use a tourniquet) - Make a fist. Then tie your tourniquet in a slip knot so that you can easily remove it.

4. Correct Needle Insertion - Insert the needle into your vein with the opening facing up at 15 to 35 degree angle. Always insert in the direction of the heart.

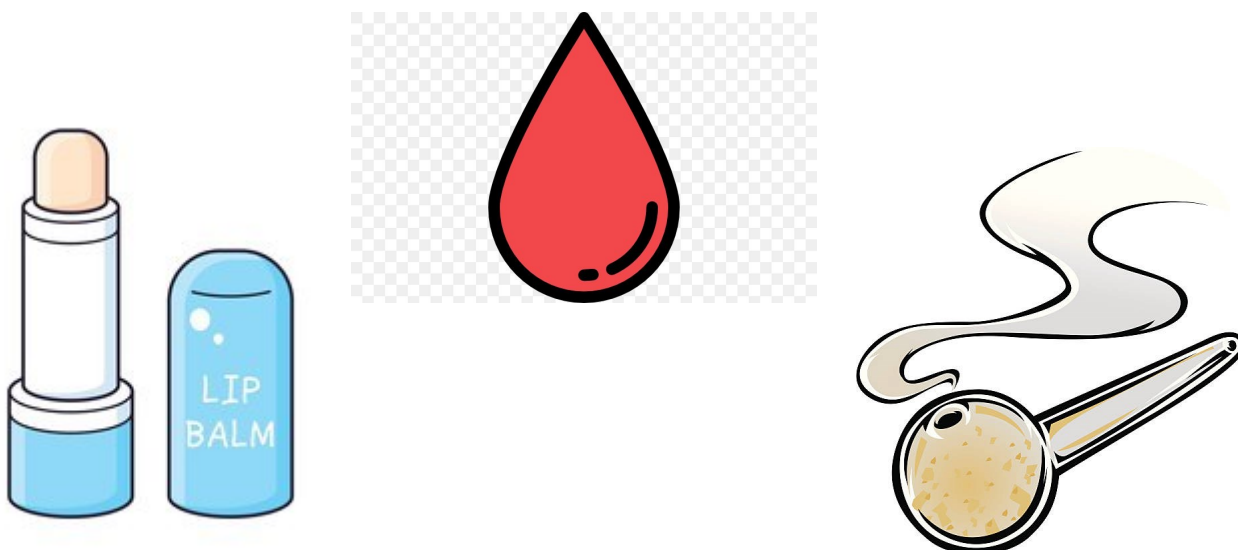


5. Register. Pull the plunger back. If there is no blood, untie the tourniquet and start over. If there is blood, untie the tourniquet first and **slowly** inject.

6. Take the needle out at the same angle.

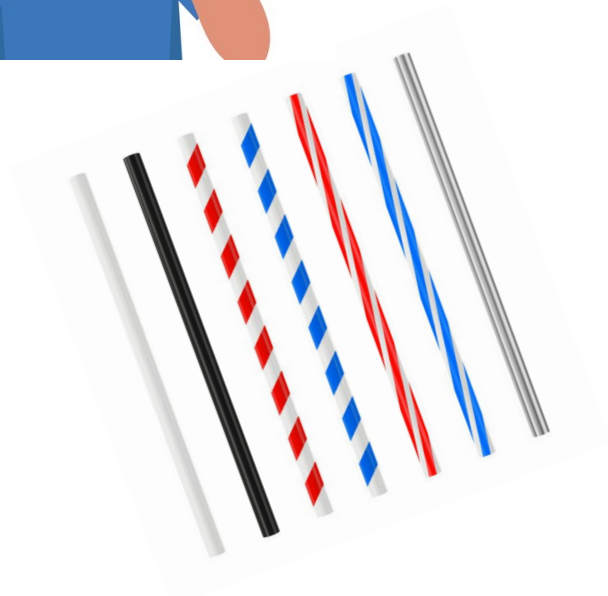
SAFER SMOKING

- **Utilize safer smoking supplies** - this includes straight stems or bowl pipes, mouthpieces, brass screens, wooden push sticks, and alcohol swabs. Avoid using makeshift pipes made from household items like aluminum cans, light bulbs, or plastic bottles. These can release toxic fumes when heated.
- **Never share supplies** - Sharing equipment can pass infections through small amounts of saliva or blood.
- **Take care of your mouthpiece** - Use pipes and mouthpieces to prevent burns, cores, and cuts.
- **Keep your pipes clean** - Clean your smoking devices regularly to remove built-up resin and gunk, which can harbor bacteria and affect airflow and taste
- **Mind you mouth** - Protect your lips from cuts and burns by using a mouthpiece. You can also apply lip balm to prevent chapped lips, which can increase the risk of infection.
- **Exhale immediately** - Holding in the vapor can burn your lungs.



SAFER SNORTING

- **Crush powder as fine as possible.**
- **Make sure everyone has their own supplies** - pipes and straws can have tiny bits of blood on them which can transmit disease. Avoid sharing equipment.
- **Switch nostrils between use** - it can cause damage to the nasal tissue in the nostril.
- **Flush nose with warm water to decrease nosebleeds.**
- **Nostril care** - Use vitamin E oil, saline spray, sinus rinse or a water-based lubricant to soothe the inside of your nose and help it heal.



OPIOID OVERDOSE PREVENTION



What is Naloxone (Narcan)?

Naloxone, also known as Narcan, is a medication known as an “opioid antagonist”. Specifically, naloxone is used in opioid overdoses to counteract life threatening depression of the central nervous and respiratory systems, allowing an overdose victim to breathe normally. Naloxone is a non-addictive 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 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 having a naloxone rescue kit nearby. Other unregulated drugs in pill or powder form can also be tested 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, cocaine, opioids, and other drugs can greatly impair brain development and a person's ability to make sound decisions.
- It is significant to understand the environments a person spends time in can greatly influence the risk for substance use. Influences can include parental substance use, peer pressures, 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 and drugs
- Have a trustworthy designated driver
- Be with people you trust
- If engaging in sexual behavior while drunk or high, use safer sex supplies.
- Get tested for sexually transmitted infections.
- Communicate with those around you about your current feelings, thoughts, and what your mind and body needs.

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