

COMMON HEALTH IMPACTS OF SUBSTANCES

Stimulants (e.g., cocaine, methamphetamine, prescription ADHD stimulants when misused)

Stimulants speed up the body's systems and can:

- Increase the risk of **heart disease, stroke, and cardiovascular-related deaths** [newsroom.heart.org]
- Cause **severe dental problems** (with methamphetamine) and damage to the nervous system [nida.nih.gov]
- Lead to sleep problems, anxiety, or worsened **mental health conditions** [nida.nih.gov]

Tobacco and Nicotine (including vaping)

These products can harm nearly every organ. They can:

- Cause **lung disease** and many types of **cancer** [nida.nih.gov]
- Lead to **heart disease** and other cardiovascular conditions [nida.nih.gov]
- Create strong nicotine dependence, making quitting hard at any age (SAMHSA and CDC identify this as a major health risk) [samhsa.gov]

QUESTIONS? WANT TO TALK MORE?

Reach out to your Community Health Worker or other Health Provider anytime.
Your health and well being matter, and you deserve support every step of the way.



**Nevada Opioid
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CASATI | School of Public Health

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SPI General Information Card For Community Healthcare Workers

*Your Life, Your Journey:
Understanding Substance Use & Screening*

WHY WE ASK ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE

Talking about alcohol, drugs, or other substances can feel uncomfortable, but these conversations are important for your health. Substances can affect sleep, mood, energy, chronic conditions, medications, and overall well being. Screening helps us understand the full picture so we can support you.

This is *not* about judgment. It's about **prevention, safety, and support.**

SUBSTANCE USE IS PART OF MANY PEOPLE'S LIVES

People use substances for many reasons, stress, pain, coping, or social connection. Whatever your reason, your Community Healthcare Worker's role is to help you stay as healthy and safe as possible.

THERE ARE MANY PATHS TO CHANGE

If you ever decide you want to make a change with your use, there are **multiple options**, including:

- **Cutting back**
Reducing how often or how much you use.
- **Using more safely**
Learning strategies that lower risk and protect your health.
- **Pausing use**
Taking breaks, short-term or long-term.
- **Stopping altogether**
Choosing to stop using substances all together.

There is **no one right way**. You choose the pace and direction.

WHY HONESTY MATTERS

Being open with your Community Healthcare Worker and healthcare providers helps us:

- Make sure medications don't interact in harmful ways
- Support your goal, whether that's cutting back, staying safe, or making a bigger change
- Connect you with resources, tools, or support if you want them
- Help prevent future health issues

We can only support you fully when we know what's really happening.

You are in control of your health journey. We're here to walk alongside you.

COMMON HEALTH IMPACTS OF SUBSTANCES

Different substances affect the body in different ways. Understanding these effects can help you make informed choices about your health and well being.

Alcohol

Alcohol is widely used, but even moderate use can impact health. Drinking can:

- Affect **brain development**, especially for young people [cdc.gov]
- Increase the risk of **injury, impaired judgment, and alcohol use disorder** [cdc.gov]
- Contribute to **heart disease deaths** when used heavily over time [newsroom.heart.org]

Cannabis

Cannabis affects both the brain and the body. It can:

- Impact **memory, attention, learning, and decision making** [cdc.gov]
- Increase **heart rate and blood pressure**, raising the risk of heart problems or stroke [cdc.gov]
- Cause lung irritation or damage when smoked [cdc.gov]
- Lead to **cannabis use disorder**, especially with high THC products or early/regular use [cdc.gov]

Opioids

Opioids—prescription or illicit—can cause serious health effects, including:

- **Overdose**, slowed breathing, and death, even when pills look “safe” or prescribed [cdc.gov]
- Increased risk of **heart infections** (such as endocarditis) and **skin infections** with injection use [nida.nih.gov]
- Strong potential for **dependency and addiction**, even when used as prescribed [cdc.gov]