



Mythbusters: Let's have a yarn about alcohol and drugs



Evidence ratings:

This resource has undergone expert review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year: Year 7–8, Year 9–10, Year 11–12

Targeted Drugs: Alcohol, Cannabis, Drugs (General), Tobacco

Tags:

Origin: Australian

Cost:

Free

Attachments

[Mythbusters: Let's have a yarn about alcohol and drugs](#)

Key Messages

Most young people don't drink or use illicit drugs	Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people don't drink or smoke at all	Smokes are not part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture

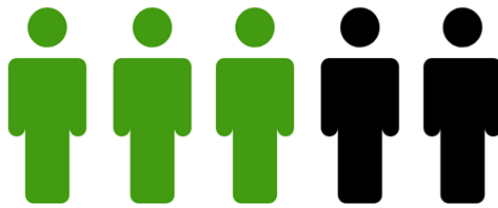
Introduction

It's important to understand the realities of who actually uses drugs and alcohol. We are going to look at what sort of myths and rumours you might have heard about alcohol and drugs, and tell you the real facts.

MYTH: Everybody's using alcohol and drugs, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

FACT: It might look like everybody is drinking grog or taking drugs from what you see online or on TV. The truth is most people your age don't drink alcohol, smoke or have never tried an illegal drug. 70% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander from 15-19 year olds have never smoked.

You are in the majority if you are avoiding drugs and alcohol.



3 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people indicated they drank less than one day a year.

To see more stories about drugs: [Not Our Way](#)

MYTH: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people drink more alcohol than non-Indigenous people

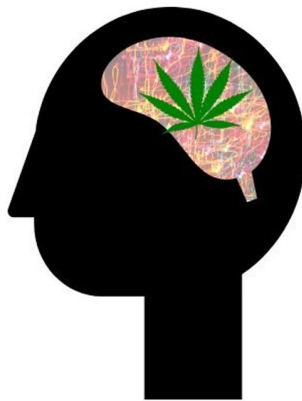
FACT: Actually, there's more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and young people who don't drink alcohol compared to non-Indigenous young people and adults!

- 27% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth have never tried alcohol, compared to 22% non-Indigenous youth.
- 31% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults don't drink any alcohol, whereas roughly 23% of non-Indigenous people don't drink.

To see more stories about grog: [Grog Brain Story](#), [Think Smart](#)

MYTH: It is safe to drive after smoking cannabis (also known as gunja or yarndi)

FACT: Smoking cannabis (gunja, yarndi) slows down your brain and body and changes your spirit. It makes it harder to concentrate on what you're doing and hard to move your body. This is why, if you use cannabis and start driving a car, you could crash and hurt yourself or someone else. In fact, you're about 3 times more likely to crash a car after smoking cannabis compared to when you're sober.



Cannabis changes how you think and act so it's important to stay safe and not drive after using cannabis.

To see more stories about cannabis: [Cannabis Yarns](#), [Gunja Brain Story](#)

MYTH: Smokes are part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture

FACT: While sharing smokes can be common in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, smokes aren't part of traditional culture. Aboriginal culture is more than 60,000 years old. While some Aboriginal communities did chew native plants that contained nicotine, smokes were only introduced to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around 300-400 years ago.



Artwork by Jenna Lee (Gilimbaa), a proud Larrakia woman. This artwork represents adults and young people sitting around a fire and using the resources here on Positive Choices to have a yarn about smokes, drugs and alcohol (for the full artwork and what it represents, [click here](#)).

MYTH: It's too hard to give up smokes because we share them around

FACT: Anyone can give up smokes, even with sharing! It might be hard to not take a smoke when everyone else around you is smoking, but there are lots of ways to avoid smoking when someone offers you one, without having to say no.

What could you do if someone offers you a smoke:

- 📌 **Be assertive.** You could say why you don't want to smoke, e.g. "I'd rather spend time doing sports" or "I don't want to smoke in front of my family or little kids".
- 📌 **Make an excuse,** e.g. "Nah, I'm good, got a sore throat".
- 📌 **Use 'delay tactics', put someone off until later,** e.g. "Not right now Cuz, I'll have one later".
- 📌 **Be a 'broken record',** continually say 'no' politely over and over again.
- 📌 **Walk away** for a bit when others start offering smokes. "Not right now, gotta talk with my mum."
- 📌 **Avoid the situation:** avoid hanging out with regular smokers if you are trying to quit, or ask people are you not to smoke when you hang out with them.

See some real stories about how some people quit smokes: [Don't Make Smokes Your Story](#)

MYTH: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are genetically more susceptible to alcohol use

FACT: The reasons for alcohol use disorder in any person are complex and varied – this is also true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For example, people might use to deal with problems in their lives, or because more people around them use alcohol. We explore this further in our fact sheet on why young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use drugs.

Have any 'facts' about grog and drugs that you want to put to the test? [Click here and let us know!](#)

Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University, and Gilimbaa Indigenous Creative Design Agency (2018).

Positive Choices artwork by Jenna Lee (Larrakia artist, Gilimbaa).