Positive Choices
Drug and Alcohol Information
Get informed, stay smart, stay safe

Factsheet

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

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

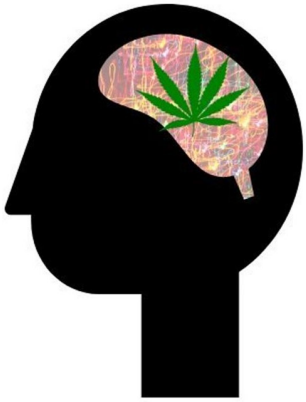
FACT: Actually, there's more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and young people who don't drink alcohol compared to non-Indigenous young people and adults!

- 27% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth have never tried alcohol, compared to 22% of 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: The effects of smoking cannabis (gunja, yarndi) include slowing down your brain and body and changing your spirit. It can make it harder to concentrate on what you're doing and harder to move your body. As a result, cannabis changes the way people do tasks and activities and can increase the risk of a car crash.



To see more stories about cannabis: Cannabis Yarns, Gunja Brain Story

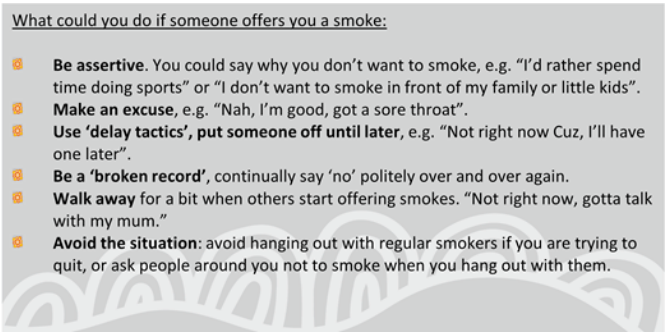
MYTH: Smokes are part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture

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.



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 onwhy 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).

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