

# ALCOHOL, DRUGS, GAMBLING

## Interventions in schools

During their schooling, young people experience a variety of situations related to various issues of health and well-being. On this sheet, you will find specific intervention guidelines that have been developed to support the work of stakeholders who plan and implement health promotion and prevention actions.

To see all the health-related recommendations presented in the EKIP reference framework: [Visit the School-based interventions section](#)

The theme of **alcohol, drugs and gambling** concerns the use of psychoactive substances (alcohol and other drugs) and the practice of gambling. A psychoactive substance is a natural or synthetic substance that acts on the central nervous system by modifying its function, causing various psychological and physical effects. Gambling refers to the irreversible wagering of a sum of money or an object of value by the gambler, with unpredictable outcomes. Alcohol and other drugs and gambling come with risks and can negatively impact health and quality of life.

### ACTIONS TO BE PRIORITIZED IN SCHOOLS SHOULD:

Enable young people to develop protective factors, such as involvement in an activity or recreational pursuits, as well as the ability to assert themselves and refuse and resist succumbing to peer pressure. Actions should also aim to delay the age of initiation to substance use and gambling, and empower young people to make informed choices by ensuring they are aware of the associated effects, risks and consequences.

In **elementary school**, educational interventions should be limited to the development of personal and social skills on themes other than alcohol, drugs and gambling.

In **secondary school**, effective structured educational interventions should combine the development of personal and social skills with theme-specific elements.



## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

In elementary school, refrain from speaking directly about alcohol and drug use or gambling. Limit interventions to questions asked by students and answer them directly, succinctly and simply. Exception: call on preventive counselling services in communities where inhalants are used.



For Elementary 6 students who use psychoactive substances and gamble, and for secondary school students

- Attempt to prevent or delay the initial use of alcohol and cannabis (the age of first use is usually between 12 and 15) through the promotion of protective factors. Provide young people who have already used alcohol or drugs or gambled with consistent and credible information on the effects and risks of these behaviours. Address ways to avoid or reduce risks (harm reduction).
- Focus on short- and medium-term risks so that they seem more tangible to young people.
- Discuss young people's perceived benefits of alcohol and drug use and gambling, and encourage them to find different strategies, focusing on positive alternatives to substance abuse.
- Explain that the use of any type of drug, whether legal or illegal, accessible or inaccessible, has effects as well as risks and can lead to negative consequences. The use of certain drugs should not be trivialized.
- Discuss different drugs separately to avoid making some substances seem less harmful than others to young people (e.g. alcohol and cannabis versus heroin).
- Convey messages that commend critical thinking and provide objective information so that young people can make informed choices about alcohol and drug use and gambling.
- Use interventions to promote young people's ability to refuse offers of alcohol or drugs, appropriately manage stress and emotions, and become involved in their community.
- Manage the composition of groups during educational activities to avoid undesirable effects such as incitement to use alcohol and drugs.
  - Favour small groups.
  - Form groups of young people who are the same age or have had similar experiences.
  - Avoid groups composed only of students with deviant behaviours.

## KEYWORDS

→ Consumption

→ Dependency

→ Psychoactive substances

→ Addiction



See also the sheet dedicated to [General recommendations for health and well-being actions in schools](#), which are not linked to a specific theme.

