



VOLLEYBALLBC

INFO SHEET

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

While drugs such as alcohol and cannabis are legal in Canada, managing their misuse is critical in sport

ALCOHOL

Signs and Symptoms:

- Irresponsible regarding commitments or responsibilities to school, sport, and relationships
- Using alcohol in situations where it is dangerous (e.g., drinking and driving, mixing medications and alcohol)
- Problems with increased aggression, rule or law-breaking behaviour

Effects on Sport Performance:

- As a central system depressant, alcohol can decrease/impair concentration, coordination, reaction time, strength, power, and endurance
- Alcohol can also impact the body's ability to absorb nutrients

CANNABIS

Signs and Symptoms:

- Red eyes
- Lethargy
- Apathy
- Increased appetite

Effects on Sport Performance:

- Slowed reaction time
- Decreased hand-eye coordination
- Impaired time perception

STIMULANT SUBSTANCES

This broad group of drugs include many forms of “party drugs”, such as cocaine, ecstasy, or amphetamines. Athletes may take them for an energetic and mood boost, or thinking this will lead to better performance, helping to cope with stress, low mood, or trauma.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Shakiness
- Rapid speech and/or movements
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lack of appetite
- Sleep disturbances
- Irritability

Effects on Sport Performance:

- Athletes sometimes believe these drugs can positively affect their performance
- Increased nervousness can negatively impact performance
- Increase heart rate and blood pressure
- Significant rise in body temperature and heat production
- Can result in overexertion, injuries, or death.

Sources: NCAA, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse



CASE ILLUSTRATION

Markus enjoyed spending time with his team training, competing, and in social settings. He became involved in more recreational alcohol and marijuana use (both with and without his team around him). Some of his teammates and friends outside of sport started to notice how often he was using. He knew his sport organization tested for pot, so he focused on alcohol as it "helped him relieve stress." He is now showing up for practice hungover, or skipping altogether. His friends have noticed that he is becoming defensive, choosing to drink in secret, and hiding how much he is drinking.

His teammates are concerned about him, but are not sure who to talk to about it: alcohol seems very normalized in post-game celebrations, and not just among players, but also families, coaches and fans.

A GROWING CONCERN: OPIOID USE

British Columbia is facing a huge societal challenge with a growing opioid crisis. Opioids may be procured legally (by being prescribed by a doctor for pain management) or a street version, purchased by the illicit drug trade. Opioids don't just relieve pain, they release endorphins, leading to "feel good" moods or a "high" sensation, making users susceptible to substance use disorders. To further the dark reality of opioid addiction, the illicit drug supply in British Columbia is increasingly toxic.

Athletes were among many populations who were exposed initially to opioids as part of a pain management strategy. Unfortunately, they can be highly addictive, and they can be difficult to wean off of, regardless of the reason they were initially taken. Part of the issue with those taking opioids is that there is shame surrounding dependency. Like all issues with addiction, see the section below on ways to address opioids in someone you know and care about.

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

- Express concern in behavioural and non-judgemental terms ("I've noticed you have seemed (tired/restless/irritated, etc.) lately - is everything ok?")
- Listen, in a sensitive and non-threatening manner. Encourage expression; remain supportive/calm
- Avoid judging, evaluating, or criticizing - keep statements supportive and/or neutral
- Depending on the relationship and age of the person, have resources and a referral pathway on hand, and reinforce how getting help is a sign of strength and that you are there for them and can help facilitate finding someone best suited to help

FOR MORE HELP AND SPECIALIZED CARE

- Go to the nearest Emergency Room for an emergency or call 911
- BC Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service: Call 604-660-9382 in the Lower Mainland or 1-800-663-1441 toll-free anywhere in B.C. Available 24 hours a day.
- HealthLink BC: Call 8-1-1 (toll-free) if you need non-emergency health information or advice. Available 24 hours a day.
- BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information: For help and support via email at bcpartners@heretohelp.bc.ca

Sources

Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse; BC Government



LEADING IN SAFE SPORT PRACTICES & FOSTERING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Visit www.volleyballbc.org/safe-sport for more information about what we are doing to address concussion, injury, abuse and maltreatment, and mental health in volleyball.