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Drugs, drug misuse and drug abuse

What is a drug?

A **drug** is any natural or artificial chemical that causes changes in the body or the mind or both when taken into the body.

On the other hand, **medicines** are drugs that are used to treat or prevent illness.

What is the relationship between drugs and medicines?

All medicines are drugs but not all drugs are medicines.

Essential medicines

Essential medicines are those that satisfy the priority health care needs of the population.

Example of essential medicine on Uganda drug list are

Antimalarial such as coartem, quinine

Pain killers such as paracetamol

Antibiotic such as ampicillin, septrin

Characteristics of essential drugs

- They are effective against diseases
- They are readily available
- They are cheap

Proper use of medicine

When taking medicine one should:

1. Take medicine only according to a doctor's instructions (in the right amount or dose).
2. Not drink directly from the medicine bottle but make use of spoons so that it is easy to measure the amount taken. The amount taken should be as prescribed by the doctor.
3. Take medicine at the right time and keep the intervals as recommended.
4. Not share medicine given with another person even if both think they are suffering from similar diseases.

Good storage of medicine

Medicine is needed to keep us in good health. Medicine can go bad if not stored properly. Medicine that has gone bad because of overstaying or being kept under poor conditions cannot cure the intended diseases. Such medicine is said to be expired. It can be dangerous (poisonous) to your health. Good storage of medicine is very important.

When storing medicine, it is important to remember that:

1. Medicine should be kept away from children. Children should not play with medicine as they can accidentally consume it and poison them.
2. Medicine should be stored in a cool dry place unless it is indicated otherwise on the container label or in the doctor's instructions. Exposure of some medicines to sunlight may affect the medicine.
3. Expired medicine should not be taken. It may be dangerous to your health.
4. The medicine container should always be closed properly.
5. Children should not play with medicine containers.

Safety measures when handling chemicals at home

There are many chemicals used at home. Which chemicals do you use in your home or school?

- Chemicals are used in the farm (applied on crops and livestock), in the house (to keep away pests), and in schools too. Chemicals are dangerous and therefore care should be taken when handling them. Some safety measures include: Store chemicals away from children, away from food, water, animals and from fire.
- Close the chemical container properly after use.
- Always wear protective clothing like gloves, masks and overcoat or overall when handling or spraying chemicals. After spraying you should take a bath, wear fresh clothes and immediately wash the ones you used.

Should an accident occur involving chemicals, the victim should be taken to the nearest health centre together with the chemical container after administering the appropriate first aid.

Always use the chemicals following the instructions given on the chemical container label.

- Chemicals should never be transferred into other containers like juice or soft drink bottles because people may drink them, mistaking them for the drinks that the container should hold.
- Keep chemicals out of the reach of children.
- You should not inhale, smell, sniff or taste chemicals.
- Dispose of empty chemical containers after use by burying them.
- Empty chemical containers should not be burned. They can explode.
- All people including children could be informed that chemicals or their containers are as dangerous as the chemicals themselves.

What is drug misuse and drug abuse?

The two terms are often confused.

Drug misuse is the use of drugs for any purpose other than that for which they are medically intended.

Examples of drug misuse

- (a) Taking wrong dose
- (b) Taking a drug for someone else
- (c) Buying a drug without doctor's prescription
- (d) Taking wrong medicine

Drug abuse

This means taking drugs classified as illegal such as cocaine, bhang, madrax and heroin

Or

Excessive use of drugs that lead to addiction such as tobacco and alcohol

Commonly abused drugs

Tobacco

People use tobacco by

- (i) Smoking
- (ii) Chewing
- (iii) Sniffing

Poisonous substances in tobacco smoke

- (a) Tar – is a sticky dark-brown substances that cause cancer of the mouth, lips, throat, and cancer.
- (b) Carbon monoxide poison hemoglobin
- (c) Nicotine –is a stimulant that cause addiction

There are two types of smokers

- (i) Active smokers- people smoke intentionally
- (ii) Passive smokers- people than inhale smoke when a smoke smokes

Effect of smoke to unborn baby

- They become underweight
- Have weak immune system
- Poor mental development
- Poor physical growth

Alcohol

It contain an addictive substance called ethanol

Common example of alcohols include beers, wine local brew

Excessive uptake of alcohol causes liver damage of liver cirrhosis

Local brew may contain poisonous methanol that causes blindness

Alcoholism

Alcoholism is when one can no longer control their use of alcohol, compulsively abuse alcohol, despite its negative ramifications, and/or experience emotional distress when they are not drinking.

Health effects of alcoholism and drug abuse

- (a) Poor health due to poor feeding habits
- (b) Lack of concentration
- (c) Addiction when a person cannot do without the drug
- (d) Impaired judgement that can lead to accidents
- (e) Loss of consciousness
- (f) Coma and death
- (g) Poor health of unborn baby
- (h) Destruction of body organs

The family and social effects of alcoholism and drug abuse

- (a) School dropout due to drug abuser failing to pay fee or attend classes
- (b) Rape- drug abuser have a tendency to rape people
- (c) Self-neglect of a drug abuser
- (d) Loss of income – drug addicts do not perform their duties or work punctually.
- (e) Drug induced accidents
- (f) Marital conflicts
- (g) Fighting and violence- drug addicts have a tendency of fighting and being violent.
- (h) Defilement
- (i) Robbery

Revision Questions

1. (a) What is an essential drug
Essential medicines are those that satisfy the priority health care needs of the population.
- (b) Give an example of an essential drug.
Panadol, spirin, coetum
- (c) Why are prescriptions important in the treatment of sickness?
To give proper treatment
To prevent overdose or underdose
2. Bbosa is suffering from severe malaria. Why would you not advise him to take medicine than that prescribed by a medical doctor?
It may lead to overdose
He may take a wrong drug
3. What is drug abuse?
Taking drugs classified as illegal
4. Give any one reason why it is not advisable to buy and use medicine from local shops?
Drugs may be expired
One may take wrong dose
One may buy wrong drug
5. Most of our problems can be solved without use drugs. Suggest any four ways in which this can be done.
 - **Maintaining proper hygiene**
 - **Feeding on balanced food**
 - **Regular exercises**
 - **Keeping proper sanitation**
- (c) What do you understand by essential drugs?
Drugs that are used to treat common diseases in a community.
- (d) Give one reason why it is not advisable for two patients to share drugs presented for one person.
 - **They do not get a full dose**
7. Write down one bad behavior which is a result of drug abuse.
 - **Defilement, rape, robbery, sadism, masochism, aggression, arson**
6. Give a reason why drugs should be kept away from children.
 - To prevent children from taking wrong doses
 - To prevent children from taking overdoses
7. (a) Give any one two ways which drug dependence can affect an individual
 - (i) Self-neglect
 - (ii) neglect of the job
 - (iii) death

(iv) loss sleep

(b) State two ways in which an individual can void drug dependence

- (i) **by joining good peer groups**
- (ii) **by trusting god**
- (i) **by going for guidance and counselling**
- (ii) **by avoiding bad peer groups**

8. Apart from taking wrong dose, give one other way in which drugs are misused.

- **Taking drugs when not sick**
- **Taking drugs for wrong disease**
- **Taking drug at wrong time**
- **Sharing drug with another person**

9. State any one way in which alcoholism affects a family

- **Loss of income**
- **School dropout**
- **Defilement**

10. (a) Give one reason why drugs should be kept;

- (i) Away from moisture and sunlight
To protect drugs from wasting away
- (ii) Out of reach of children
Prevent children from overdoses

(b) State any two ways in which people in a family misuse drugs

- (i) **sharing drugs**
- (ii) **not following the prescription**

11. Apart from curing diseases, give one other characteristic of essential drug.

- (i) cheap
- (ii) readily available