

WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR BODY?

(document for students)

WORK DYNAMIC

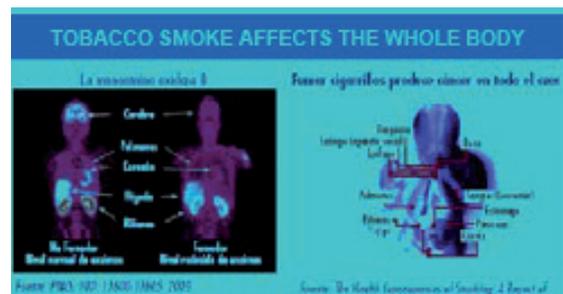
The final result of this session is the formulation of the questions that, within the activity of the “Let’s talk about drugs” programme of the “la Caixa” Welfare Project, you will ask Dr. Rafael Maldonado (university chair of pharmacology at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra). To do this, we have prepared an introduction that you must read carefully (better individually) so that we can then analyse a series of myths about the effect of drugs. This will help open up a discussion amongst yourselves that will make the question-making more productive regarding the subject **What happens to our body?**, which you will ask Dr. Rafael Maldonado.

1. INTRODUCTION

The different types of drugs in existence have different effects on our nervous system: Some are stimulants and others depressants; some speed up our mental functioning, with the risk of increasing mistakes, and others slow it down or distort it; some create a sensation of euphoria, others produce hallucinations or changes in the perception of reality. All of them interfere in the normal functioning of our nervous system and cause an alteration in our capacities. But we also find effects on our organism and the bodily functions.

These are the immediate effects:

- **Tobacco** produces a decrease in lung capacity, a decrease in sporting performance, decrease of the senses of taste and smell, bad breath and body odour, yellowing of the fingers and teeth (as well as infections and decay), and cough and phlegm, above all in the morning.



- The main effects of **alcohol** vary with its concentration in the blood, and can reach, in the most serious cases, a state of ethylic coma and even death due to the inhibition of the respiratory centres.
- **Cannabis** produces an increase in appetite, dry mouth, shiny and reddish eyes, tachycardia and hypertension, sweating, somnolence and uncoordinated movements.

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- **Cocaine** produces inhibition of appetite, as well as other physiological effects: tachycardia, sweating, increase in arterial tension, contraction of blood vessels, increase in body temperature and dilation of the pupils.
- **Heroin** decreases pain, but also produces nausea and vomiting, inhibits the appetite and produces respiratory depression.
- **Ecstasy** produces tachycardia, arrhythmia and hypertension, dry mouth, sweating, dehydration, shivers, nausea, contraction of the jawbone, shaking and an increase in body temperature.
- **LSD** also produces hypothermia and low blood pressure and lack of coordination.

These are the long-term effects:

- **Tobacco** causes massive damage to the respiratory and circulatory system (heart attack and cerebrovascular accidents). It causes a large variety of cancers. Not only lung cancer but also cancer of the larynx, oesophagus, kidney, bladder, etc. It can also cause sexual impotence in men.
- **Alcohol** causes great damage to the digestive tube, liver and pancreas, heart diseases, sexual impotence and, in an advanced stage, alcoholic dementia.
- **Cannabis** is associated with disorders of the memory, concentration and learning. To these effects we should add the inherent risk of smoking it in association with tobacco.
- **Cocaine** causes, as well a high level of dependency, serious neurological and psychiatric disorders, the perforation of the nasal cartilage, respiratory diseases, a high risk of heart attack and cerebral accident, disorders of loss of sexual desire, impotence, menstrual disorders and infertility.
- **Heroin** causes digestive disorders and loss of weight, as well as the inhibition of sexual drive. Moreover, all kinds of infections relating to the hygienic conditions of taking, as well as collapsed veins and skin abscesses. It is also associated with arthritis and other rheumatic problems.
- **Ecstasy** may lead to hypothermia with serious consequences, dehydration, Renal and hepatic failure, haemorrhages and heart attacks. It also causes sleep disorders, panic attacks and aggressiveness.
- **LSD** can cause psychotic reactions and panic, popularly known as having “a bad trip”, with risk of suicide, and flashbacks: the reappearance of hallucinations without having taken the drug.

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5) "Alcohol is good for the heart"

6) "Cannabis is an inoffensive product for the health, since it is a natural product. It is an ecological drug, the substance of peace and relaxation"

7) "Smoking cannabis is less harmful than smoking tobacco"

8) "Cocaine is a less dangerous drug than other substances"

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3. QUESTIONS TO ASK DR. RAFAEL MALDONADO

Having analysed the myths, and after a discussion between yourselves, think of 5 or more questions to ask Dr. Rafael Maldonado (remember that you have a scientific focus and that Dr. Maldonado is an expert in neurobiology of addiction):

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

