



Coach's Handbook for Preventing Youth Tobacco, Alcohol and Drug Use

*A discussion guide to help coaches
talk to their players about smoking,
drinking and illegal drug use*



Dear Coach,

Thank you for donating your valuable time to coach young athletes. Working with youths is very challenging and rewarding. Kids look up to adults and will readily do what you do and listen to what you say. This is especially true on the athletic field. Whether you want to be or not, you are a role model to them. You have an exceptional opportunity to mold their lives in many ways.

The purpose of this handbook is to allow you to be an even better role model. It will help you explain in clear and concise terms why tobacco, alcohol and drugs are dangerous and should not be used. Please take a few minutes each week to read through the material and then present the lessons to your team.

If you keep just one young person on your team from using drugs, alcohol or tobacco, you have been successful. You may have even saved a life.

Have a great season!



The format and some of the lesson content in this publication has been taken, with permission, from a coach's handbook distributed by the Kids Sports Network (KSN), a nonprofit association located in San Antonio, Texas. KSN promotes quality sports for kids and provides training programs for volunteer coaches across the country. For more information, contact:

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This manual belongs to _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Coach's Handbook

This handbook is designed to help youth sport coaches provide information to young athletes about the negative effects of tobacco, alcohol and other drug use. For the program to work, you need to talk with your players for 10-15 minutes each week about avoiding these substances. This handbook will be a discussion guide through eight weeks of your season.



How it works:

- Once a week, read the appropriate exercise from this manual.
- Bring this handbook with you when talking to your players.
- Using the handbook, lead them through the discussion.
- The shaded boxes contain comments you may use to get their attention.
- Talk with your team members, making sure they understand what you're saying. Encourage their responses.
- Answer questions from the team members as best you can.

Use the Web sites at the end of this booklet for additional information about any of these topics. The SAFE Web site, www.chesterfieldsafe.org, also provides links to many sites and to resources in the community.

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LESSON 1 – Why do kids use tobacco, alcohol or other drugs?

Explain to your players that you, as their coach, are concerned about their health and athletic performance during the season – and throughout their lives.

ASK: Why do you think some young people use tobacco, alcohol or other drugs?

Give some examples to get the conversation started:

- “To escape a bad situation”
- “To fit in”
- “To act cool”

EXPLAIN:

These feelings are common among young people. But using tobacco, alcohol or other drugs can produce damaging effects today and possibly for a lifetime to come.



ASK: Why is the use of tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs especially harmful to athletes?

Let team members share some ideas. Then add any others from the list below.

- Alcohol and some drugs can slow down reaction time.
- Tobacco makes you short of breath.
- Steroids can give men and women acne all over their bodies.
- Alcohol and drugs can mess up your coordination.

By coming to practice, doing your best, supporting your teammates, and making healthy choices to stay tobacco-, alcohol- and drug-free, you will be doing your part for this team!

ASK: Do you think most middle-school kids smoke, drink or use drugs?

EXPLAIN:

Most middle-school kids don't smoke, drink or use drugs. According to a recent national survey of middle-school students, in the past year:

- Four out of five hadn't smoked even one cigarette
- More than four out of five hadn't used any kind of illegal drug
- Two out of three hadn't had even one drink of alcohol

EMPHASIZE:

When you use, you lose. I want you to be winners – in sports and in life. Using tobacco, alcohol or other drugs can be harmful and can keep you from reaching your goals. For that reason, we'll take a few minutes each week to talk about keeping our bodies free of substances that are harmful.

LESSON 2 – Smart athletes don't smoke

All use of tobacco – including snuff and chewing tobacco – creates serious risks to your health. Over time, the use of tobacco causes more deaths than any other drug. It is illegal to use any form of tobacco before you are 18 years old.

ASK: Why don't we want you athletes to use any kind of tobacco?

Help the players get started by giving them one or two of the examples below.

- Causes shortness of breath
- Causes higher-than-usual heart rates
- Reduces how hard or long a person can exercise

EXPLAIN:

There is no way that you can be your best at sports if you can't breathe right or can't run and play as hard as your opponent.

- Smoking prevents your lungs from getting enough oxygen to your muscles – so you get tired faster.
- Teen smokers have shortness of breath almost three times as often as teens who don't smoke. Breath is something an athlete can't afford to be short on!
- Nicotine in tobacco raises your heart rate and your blood pressure. Sports already work your body hard; you don't need to be wasting extra heartbeats.
- Teen smokers produce phlegm (yuck!) more than twice as often as teens who don't smoke. Ever try breathing and spitting at the same time?

ASK: Do you think most middle-school students smoke?

EXPLAIN:

According to a recent national survey, four out of five middle-school students haven't smoked even one cigarette in the previous year, and nine out of 10 haven't smoked in the previous month. So though it may sometimes seem that "everybody's doing it," the truth is that most of your peers don't smoke.

ASK: Let's review for a minute. What do you lose when you use tobacco?

EXPLAIN:

Let them repeat some of the consequences above. Add others:

- You can get in trouble with your parents.

- You can lose your life to cancer.
- You can get suspended from school if caught smoking.
- You can get fined for underage smoking.

ASK: What can you do if a friend offers you a cigarette?

EXPLAIN:

Get their suggestions. Add any from the list below.

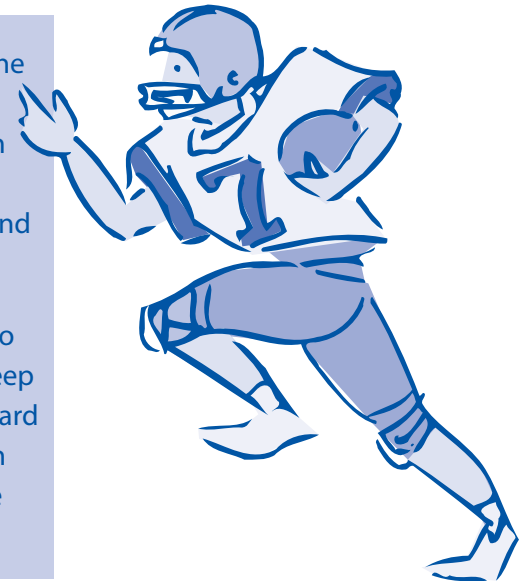
- No, thanks! I don't want to affect my ability to play sports.
- No, thanks! Smoking makes you smell bad.
- Just leave. You don't have to say anything.
- Find something else to do. Shoot some hoops, listen to music or just go home.

EMPHASIZE:

Stay away from kids who push you to use tobacco with them. Remember, most kids don't smoke or chew. Besides, it isn't healthy to be breathing secondhand smoke. If somebody offers you tobacco, remember your commitment to yourself, your coach and your team and say, "NO!"

Tobacco is expensive, and the price continues to go up. Why waste all that money on a product that stains your teeth and makes your hair and clothes stink?

Three out of four teens who smoke every day say they keep smoking because it's really hard to quit. Why be hooked on nicotine when you can be hooked on sports?



LESSON 3 – Alcohol and athletes don't mix

Drinking alcohol is illegal until the age of 21. Even when you're old enough to drink, alcohol should be used responsibly.

ASK: How many of you have seen someone intoxicated or "drunk"? What were they like? How were they when they sobered up?

You want your team members to realize that drinking and getting drunk isn't cool. How cool is it to trip over things, say stupid things, be obnoxious, or throw up when you're drunk? Besides being foolish, drunk people are a danger to themselves as well as others.

EXPLAIN:

Alcohol is a depressant. At first, it makes some people feel relaxed or friendlier. But soon the people become sad, angry, out of control or sleepy. It also makes it harder to think clearly and make decisions.

ASK: Who can tell me why alcohol is especially bad for athletes?

EXPLAIN:

Alcohol will:

- Slow your reaction time – good reflexes are important in any sport
- Blur your vision – sharp vision is critical in sports
- Decrease your concentration – a lack of focus hurts your game
- Cause mood swings and outbursts – that doesn't help your teamwork
- Reduce your skills – you need all your skills to play this game
- Reduce your good judgment – you need to make smart choices on the court or field

ASK: Do you think most middle-school kids drink?

EXPLAIN:

No – most middle school kids don't drink. In fact, according to a



national survey, nearly two out of three had not had even one drink in the past year, and nine out of 10 hadn't drunk any alcohol in the past month.

ASK: What should you do if someone offers you a beer at a party?

EXPLAIN:

Let them suggest some ideas. You might add some of the following, if they don't come up in the discussion.

- Say, "No thanks, I don't need alcohol to have a good time."
- Say, "No thanks, drinking is against my team's training rules."
- Go do something else. Shoot some hoops, listen to music, go to a movie.
- Just leave. You don't have to say anything. If the party is busted for underage drinking, you can get in trouble too, even if you weren't drinking.

ASK: Let's review. What do you lose if you use alcohol?

EXPLAIN:

Go over some of the items above. Team members may add additional things, such as you might:

- Lose your driver's license or your right to get your driver's permit until you're older than your friends
- Get hurt or lose your life from a drunk-driving crash or from a swimming or boating accident caused by being under the influence of alcohol
- Get sick or die from alcohol poisoning (drinking too much alcohol too quickly)

You can also:

- Get in trouble with your parents
- Get suspended or expelled from school
- Get arrested for underage drinking
- Lose your right to participate in sports

EMPHASIZE:

If someone asks you to drink, say, "NO!" Real friends will respect you for it. Besides, most kids don't drink, so hang with them.

LESSON 4 – Marijuana – a big mistake

After alcohol and tobacco, marijuana is the drug most abused by young people. Its effects are similar to alcohol and, because it is smoked, it has many of the same health consequences as tobacco use.

ASK: Who can remember some of the effects of alcohol on athletic performance?

Let them discuss these for a couple of minutes.

EXPLAIN:

Marijuana has similar effects:

- Affects perception, timing, movement and coordination – you can't play well in slow motion
- Shortens your memory – how are you going to remember the plays?
- Can cause mood swings and emotional outbursts – not good for teamwork
- Decreases concentration – to be a winner you must stay focused
- Affects thinking and judgment – how can you play well when your mind is foggy?

In addition, frequent marijuana smokers may:

- Develop the breathing problems and coughing and wheezing similar to cigarette smokers
- Get cancers like those caused by cigarette smoking

Marijuana can make you lose your desire to do much of anything – including participate on the team.

ASK: Do you think most middle-school students have tried marijuana?

EXPLAIN:

Although marijuana is the most frequently used illegal drug, only one in 10 middle-school youths have tried it and only one in 20 have used it in the previous month.

ASK: What should you do if someone offers you a joint?

EXPLAIN:

Have them suggest some ideas. If they haven't been mentioned, you may also want to include the following:

- Be more careful about who you hang around with.
- Tell your friend that weed will prevent you from performing at your best in sports and life.
- Find something else to do. Shoot some hoops, listen to music or get something to eat.
- Say, "NO" and leave!
- Just leave. You don't have to say anything.

ASK: So, what do you lose when you use marijuana?

EXPLAIN:

Let them go over some of the negative effects of marijuana. You (or they) may add such things as:

- You can have more trouble with your schoolwork because it's harder to remember things.
- You can get in trouble with your parents.
- You can get suspended or expelled from school for using or possessing marijuana.
- You can get arrested for using marijuana.
- You can lose your driver's license or the right to get your learner's permit until you're older than your friends.



EMPHASIZE:

If someone asks you to try marijuana, say, "NO." Real friends will respect you for it. Staying away from marijuana will help you keep your edge, your competitive spirit and your winning attitude.

LESSON 5 – Steroids – a quick way to ruin your athletic career

Athletes should never use non-prescription steroids. Because steroid use can cause serious damage to your body, it is banned from all athletic competition. Use of steroids is considered cheating, because it illegally improves performance.

ASK: Who knows what illegal steroids are and why they are taken?

EXPLAIN:

Steroids are powerful chemicals designed to make you stronger and build muscle faster. Some athletes think that taking steroids will give them an edge over their opponents.

ASK: What are some of the health hazards of steroids?

EXPLAIN:

Steroids can cause:

- Violent and aggressive behavior (“roid rage”)
- Stunted growth, when used while the body is still developing
- Acne all over the body
- Major depression
- Men to go bald and their breasts to swell like women’s
- Women to grow facial hair and their breasts to shrink

ASK: Do you think lots of teens use steroids?

EXPLAIN:

Only 2 percent of middle-school students have ever used steroids – that’s about two out of a hundred. Only four out of a hundred high-school students have used them. Most of the users are male.



Athletes who use steroids to try to improve their performance are not only risking their health – they are risking their character. Taking steroids is dishonest. Putting forth your best effort through hard work and training is what counts.

ASK: What should you do if someone offers you steroids?

EXPLAIN:

Let them kick around some ideas. You might include some of the following:

- Tell them you don’t need steroids – you rely on your own abilities and strength.
- Tell them it isn’t worth the risk of the bad side effects or getting caught or arrested.
- Say, “NO” and leave!
- Just leave. You don’t have to say anything.

ASK: So, what do you lose when you use steroids?

EXPLAIN:

Let them repeat some of the consequences above, such as:

- Damage to growing bodies (stunted growth)
- Change in looks (acne, breasts and baldness in men, facial hair in women)
- Depression or violent behavior

Also add that you can be arrested and suspended or expelled from school for steroid use. A trophy can be taken away and disgrace can follow. Some well-known athletes have lost not only their medals, but also their reputations by using steroids.

EMPHASIZE:

Stay away from anyone who pushes you to use steroids. You don’t need an illegal drug to perform better – just work harder. Winning at the cost of harming your health or damaging your reputation isn’t worth it.

LESSON 6 – Cocaine and crack – deadly choices

Both cocaine and crack – a stronger and more dangerous version of cocaine – are very harmful and addictive. These stimulants give users a short-lived high that is followed by depression, edginess and a desire for more of the drug.

ASK: Who knows some of the effects of cocaine and crack?

EXPLAIN:

Let them offer some ideas, then explain some of the really dangerous side effects:

- Affects your emotions – mood swings, panic attacks and confusion, even when you're not high
- Affects eating and sleeping
- Can cause a heart attack, stroke, or breathing failure; any of these can result in sudden death
- Is very addictive; even first-time users of crack can get hooked

People have died of heart attacks or breathing failure the first, 10th or 100th time they used cocaine. Is it worth the risk?

ASK: Do you think lots of teens use cocaine or crack?

EXPLAIN:

Only three out of 100 middle-school students and six out of 100 high-school students have used cocaine at least once in the past year.

ASK: What if someone offers you cocaine or crack? What should you do?

EXPLAIN:

Kick around some ideas, including the options listed below.

- Be more careful about who you hang around with. Most kids don't use.
- Say, "No, thanks. I'm hooked on sports and don't want to get hooked on cocaine."

- Find something else to do. Shoot some hoops, listen to music or get something to eat.
- Say, "NO" and leave!
- Just leave. You don't have to say anything.

ASK: So, what do you lose if you use cocaine?

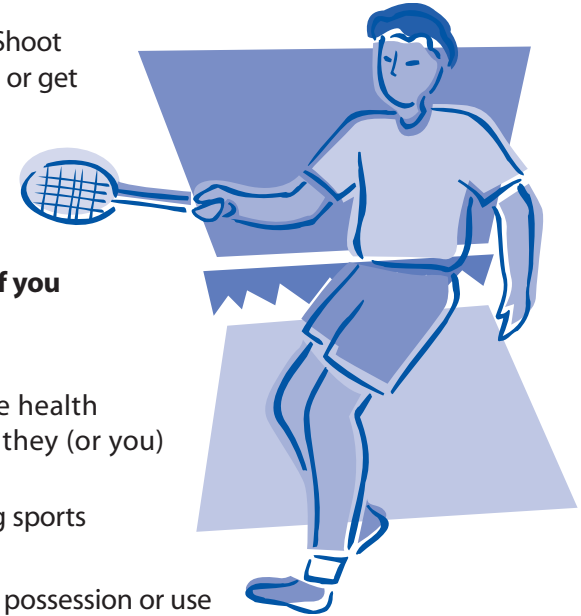
EXPLAIN:

Let them repeat some of the health consequences above. Then they (or you) can add:

- Lose your interest in playing sports
- Get in trouble with parents
- Get arrested for illegal drug possession or use
- Get suspended or expelled from school
- Lose your right to drive or to get your learner's permit until you're older than most of your friends

EMPHASIZE:

If someone asks you to try cocaine, remember your commitment to yourself, your coach and your team and say, "NO."



LESSON 7 – Beware – inhalants are poisons

Inhalants are chemicals found in common household products that are sniffed or breathed to cause a high. They affect the brain with speed and force and can cause serious physical and mental damage. Younger adolescents especially need to realize the dangers of inhalants. They are more likely to try them, as these products are easily accessible.

ASK: Who can give me some examples of common products containing inhalants?

EXPLAIN:

Let them think of a few examples (see list below). Don't add any products to what they already know. Just say that any product that is being used in a way it is not designed for (such as breathing a product's vapors) is dangerous.

- Spray paint
- Gasoline
- Permanent markers
- Nail polish
- Hair spray
- Paint thinner
- Whipped cream canisters
- Glues

ASK: Why are inhalants so dangerous, especially to young athletes?

EXPLAIN:

Inhalants can cause:

- Damage to the lungs by robbing them of oxygen
- Uneven and rapid heart beats
- Painful headaches
- Loss of memory and confusion
- Trouble with coordination
- Sudden death when the inhaled chemicals replace the oxygen in your lungs, causing the user to suffocate or to have a heart attack



ASK: Do you think lots of middle-school kids use inhalants?

EXPLAIN:

Inhalant use is actually higher in middle-school than in high school, probably because these items are easy to get. But still only six out of 100 middle-school students have used inhalants in the past year, and only three out of 100 have used one in the past month.

ASK: What should you do if someone wants you to try sniffing or “huffing” a product?

EXPLAIN:

Let them come up with some ideas such as the ones below:

- “No, thanks. I don’t want to risk my life just for a few minutes of a different sensation.”
- “No, thanks. I don’t want to pollute my body with toxic substances.”
- “No, thanks. I want my mind and body at its best so I can be a good athlete.”
- Find something else to do. Shoot some hoops, listen to music or get something to eat.
- Say, “NO” and leave.
- Just leave. You don’t have to say anything.

ASK: So, what do you lose if you use inhalants?

EXPLAIN:

Review the items above regarding the threat to their health and lives.

EMPHASIZE:

Remember, breathing or sniffing a product that isn’t made for that purpose is very dangerous. Don’t pollute your body with toxic substances. If a friend wants you to try huffing or sniffing, remember your commitment to yourself and your team and say, “NO!”

LESSON 8 – Helping a friend

Here are some ideas for helping a team member or a friend who may have gotten into trouble with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs – or if they tried something only once!

We're a team when we're playing sports
and when we help each other stay tobacco-,
alcohol- and drug-free.

ASK: We've talked about what you can do to help yourself and others to be tobacco-, alcohol- and drug-free. Who remembers what to do?

EXPLAIN:

Let them offer some ideas, then reinforce these following key points:

- Stay away from kids using tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.
- Use your involvement in sports and desire to be a good athlete as a reason not to use.
- Do something else, like go shoot hoops, go home, listen to music or get something to eat.
- Say, "NO" and leave!
- Walk away, you don't need to say anything.
- If somebody offers you alcohol, tobacco or drugs, remember your pledge to yourself, your coach and your team. Say, "NO."

ASK: I'm sure almost all of you have known some other kid who messed around with alcohol, tobacco or drugs, right? What should you do if a friend makes that mistake – even just once?

EXPLAIN;

Let the kids think it over and struggle with it for a while, then lead them toward the idea that being a friend means helping each other.

ASK: What's the difference between getting a friend "in trouble" and getting a friend "into help?"

EXPLAIN:

Let them talk about this.

Common sense tells us that helping a friend address drug or alcohol use early can help keep it from getting out of control and causing serious harm. That's why it's important not to wait to just "see what happens."

ASK: What are some ways you could help a friend?

EXPLAIN:

Let them explore some ideas:

- Talk with your friend about what you've seen. If the friend is on this team, tell them you're concerned that his or her use could affect his or her playing and risk losing the right to participate. If you don't say something about your concerns, your friend may think that you think his or her use is no big deal.
- If you're not comfortable talking to your friend by yourself, bring another friend to help you out.
- If you aren't comfortable talking face to face, send your friend an e-mail.
- Talk to a grownup you trust about your concerns – a parent, schoolteacher, counselor, pastor or me. We'll try to get them the help that they need.





Additional Resources

For additional information on tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, the following Web sites have a wealth of information.

www.theantidrug.com

www.steriodabuse.org

www.inhalants.org

www.checkyourself.org

For kid- and teen-oriented information:


www.health.org/features/kidsarea/funstuff

www.teen.drugabuse.gov

www.freevibe.com

For local community resources:

www.chesterfieldsafe.org



Substance Abuse Free Environment Inc. (SAFE) is a nonprofit organization in Chesterfield County, Virginia, devoted to preventing substance abuse. Members include representatives from the county, schools and community.

VISION

The vision of SAFE is a community free of substance abuse.

MISSION:

SAFE unites organizations and individuals to promote and sustain a healthy community free of substance abuse.

GOALS:

- Promote a consistent message of no underage smoking or drinking and no illegal drug use.
- Educate the public about alcohol and drug issues.
- Provide information about community resources.
- Promote healthy alternatives for youths and families.

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