Dear Teacher:

Providing teens with scientific information about how abusing drugs interferes with the development and functioning of their brains and bodies can help them make better decisions.

The Heads Up student article “Drugs + Your Brain” and accompanying student work sheet “Mission Control” focus on the consequences of drug abuse as it affects a person’s brain. Future articles in the series will highlight the effects of drugs on the body’s major organs, as well as on a person’s behavior— affecting not just the individual, but also family, friends, and communities.

By sharing this article and working through these exercises with your students, you are providing them with important information on the brain-body connection and the many risks they expose themselves to if they abuse drugs.

Sincerely,

Nora Volkow, M.D.
Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse

In This Installment:

• Student article: Facts for teens about the effects of drug abuse on the body, with an emphasis on the brain.

• Student work sheet: Students learn about different systems of the brain, their connections with how the body functions, and how abusing drugs can interfere with normal functioning.

More Information

• For more information on drugs, go to teens.drugabuse.gov or scholastic.com/headsup.

• For immediate help with a crisis, call 1-800-273-TALK.

• To locate a treatment center, call 1-800-662-HELP or visit http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov.

For printable past and current articles in the HEADS UP series, go to scholastic.com/headsup/teachers. For other activities and teaching support, go to drugabuse.gov/parents-teachers.
Mission Control
Understanding the Brain’s Central Control System

Study the information and diagram on this page, as well as the information from the article “Drugs + Your Brain.” Then read the health effects caused by drug abuse (below the illustration), and write the name of the brain area involved in creating the health effect.

1. Abusing prescription painkillers or sedatives can slow and stop breathing: ____________________

2. Many parts of the brain are affected over time with repeated drug use, leading to addiction.
   Name two: ____________________

3. Steroids and methamphetamine can lead to aggressive behavior: ____________________

4. Marijuana and alcohol can affect coordination and movement: ____________________

5. Combining sedatives with alcohol can slow the heart rate: ____________________

6. Marijuana impairs the ability to think clearly: ____________________

Think It Through: The cerebral cortex does not fully develop until a person is about 25 years of age. Why is this important for teens to know when it comes to decisions involving drugs? Explain your reasoning.