

# DANGERS OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE/ ABUSE AT HIGHER INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING

A Student's  
Information Guide



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## Introduction

**A**lcohol and drug use/abuse refer to use of a substance (drug/alcohol) in which the user consumes it in amounts or with methods that are harmful to themselves or others. Substance use is common among young people. Yet, numerous studies have shown that the use of alcohol, khat, cannabis and tobacco by young people can be harmful and may lead to a decline in academic performance, as well as increased risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

## University/College Students and alcohol/drug abuse

Several studies have shown that cases of alcohol and drug use/abuse are common among university/college students.

For example, a study in Kenya showed that more than

two thirds (68%) of university students are exposed to alcohol, tobacco, miraa (khat), glue sniffing, bhang (marijuana) and even hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine.

A study carried out in South-western Uganda showed that University students represented 9.2% of khat chewers and the majority of khat chewers were in the age

range of 16-25 years. Results of a study in March 2014 show that 48% of students at Nkumba, 42% at Makerere, 39% at Kampala International University and 54% at Uganda Christian University take alcohol. Smoking or tobacco use stands at 12% in all the 4 Universities. Second hand smoking where a neighbor is the one smoking is another health risk commonly ignored.

## Why do students consume alcohol and other drugs?

If these substances are dangerous, why then are University students consuming them? There are various reasons why students consume alcohol and other drugs. Some do it out of peer-pressure from friends while at social gatherings either because everyone else seems to be doing it or because they believe it's the 'cool' thing to do. Others believe that drug or alcohol abuse offers a way to escape from school or work related stress, financial worries or relationship problems. Some feel that alcohol or drugs provide a way to compensate for feelings of shyness or low self-esteem. Sometimes, they think these drugs will act as a substitute for satisfying relationships, educational accomplishments or self-fulfilment.

## Major Consequences of Alcohol/Drug Abuse

There is no doubt that alcohol and other drug use/abuse have dire consequences on the society and long term effects on individuals and their families. Some of the common consequences include long term health complications, psychological and behavioural disorders, high risk of HIV infection and STDs, and risk of injury and harm to others.



## Long term health Complications

Studies on disease control have reported an association between drug abuse during adolescence and adverse long term health outcomes including damage to the central nervous system leading to deficits in verbal learning and attention across the lifespan. Other serious long term outcomes include cancer, heart disease and liver cirrhosis.

## Psychological

The use of alcohol and drugs can progress through stages; from the stage of experimentation to stages of more frequent use, and ultimately to dependence level where consumption is at high level. At the stage of physical and psychological dependence, there is craving for the drug or alcohol and subsequent failure to tolerate withdrawal when their use is stopped. There are also manifestations of social, physical, psychological and spiritual complications. The individual and family and wider society become adversely affected by the consequences of alcohol and drug abuse. A study of University students has found higher levels of stress among those that take alcohol or drugs.

## Behavioural

Alcohol and drug use/abuse may lead to failure to fulfill obligations at work, school or home including poor work performance, absenteeism, suspension or expulsion from school, and neglect of dependants. A study carried out in Kampala showed that alcohol use disorder or problems were significantly associated with lack of job satisfaction, poor health, problems in implementing personal plans, disciplinary problems, inability to save from personal earnings, debts, and absenteeism from work. Studies among University students have shown similar

results especially in connection with poor academic grades.

## HIV/AIDS and STDs

While everybody faces the risk of getting HIV, high alcohol consumption is one of the most prevalent behavioral risk factors for HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) because alcohol increases risky sexual behaviors such as multiple sexual partnerships and unprotected sex. Alcohol is also associated with increased risk of physical injury, including rape. Studies among University students in Uganda confirm the same findings.

## Injury and permanent incapacity

The relationship between injury and substance abuse is well-documented. You are more likely to get involved in an injury when under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Being in a vehicle driven by a person under the influence of alcohol is equally risky. According to the Uganda Police Force, the number of road traffic injuries rose to 299 in 2011 from 194 in 2010. Most of these road traffic injuries lead to permanent disability.





## Crime and Imprisonment

Substance use can lead to criminal activities for which you can be imprisoned for several years. In 2011, a total of 2,054 males and 42 females in Kampala, were arrested and charged in court as a result of drug use and trafficking.

**SAVE YOUR FUTURE  
BY SAYING 'NO' TO  
ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG  
USE. THE RESPONSIBILITY  
IS IN YOUR HANDS!**

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## Where to go for counseling or treatment for alcohol/ drug abuse:

### Serenity Centre

Near Clock Tower, Kampala

Phone: (Office) 0414 267580/ 597148, 0312 - 298842

Email: [serenity@utlonline.co.ug](mailto:serenity@utlonline.co.ug)

Website: <http://serenitycentre.org/>

### Butabika National Mental Referral Hospital

Alcohol and Drug Unit

P.O.Box 7017, Kampala, Uganda.

Tel: 0414-504-376, 0414-504-388

Website: <http://www.butabikahospital.com/>

### Makerere University Counseling and guidance Centre

Opposite Mary Stuart Hall

Tel: +256-772-558022

Website: <http://mak.ac.ug/university-services/counseling-and-guidance>

### Other centres can be found on this website:

<http://www.uydel.org/downloads/State%20of%20Alcohol%20Abuse%20in%20Uganda-20110706-161512.pdf>

## For further information especially about research please contact:

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