

GET THE FACTS:

Drug Abuse Puts Your Whole Body at Risk.



Read the Label

Prescription medications may be mistakenly thought of as safe because they are prescribed by a doctor for an illness—but if they are not prescribed for you, then they are not safe for you.

Abuse of **prescription opioids**, such as Vicodin® and OxyContin®, can lead to addiction. Taking a single large dose could cause **severe respiratory depression** (includes difficulty in breathing or stopped breathing) that can lead to death. The same holds true for abuse of **prescription central nervous system depressants**, such as Xanax® and Valium®.

Abuse of **prescription stimulants**, such as Ritalin® or Adderall®, can lead to **feelings of hostility** or **paranoia**. Further, taking high doses of a stimulant may result in **dangerously high body temperature** and an **irregular heartbeat**. There is also the potential for **heart system failure** or **fatal seizures**.

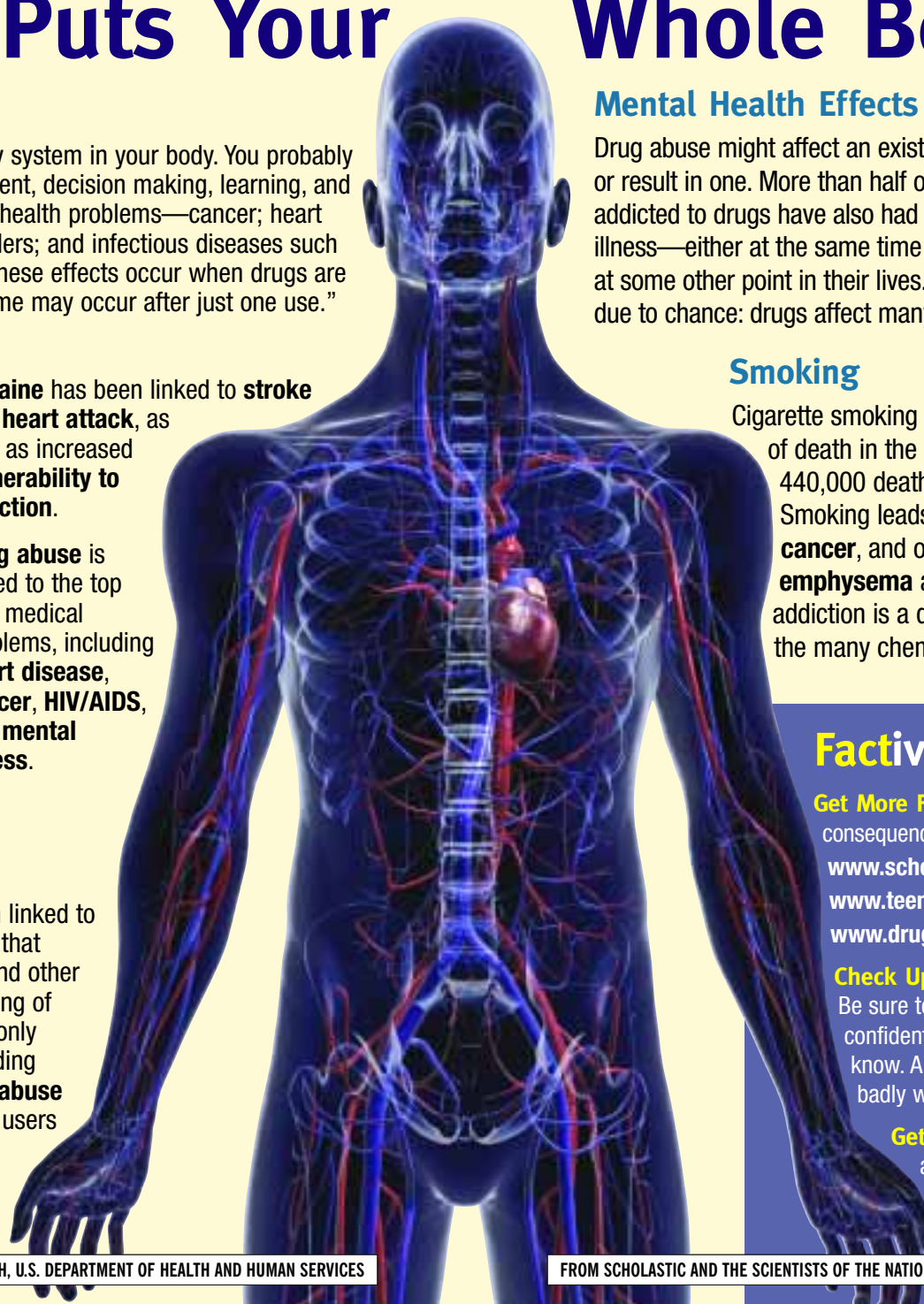
Research shows . . .

“Drug abuse and addiction can affect almost every system in your body. You probably know that drugs affect feelings and moods, judgment, decision making, learning, and memory. But they can also cause or worsen other health problems—cancer; heart disease; lung disease; liver function; mental disorders; and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and tuberculosis. Some of these effects occur when drugs are used at high doses or after prolonged use, and some may occur after just one use.”
 —Nora Volkow, M.D., Director of NIDA

- **Tobacco addiction** increases risk of **lung and heart disease**, as well as **premature aging of the skin**.
- **Inhalants** spread toxic chemicals throughout the body, and can cause **blackouts** and **hearing loss** as well as **liver, kidney, and bone-marrow damage**.
- **Methamphetamine** can cause **cardiac damage, elevated heart rate, and convulsions**, and can also lead to diseased gums and teeth, known as “**meth mouth**.”
- **Cocaine** has been linked to **stroke** and **heart attack**, as well as increased **vulnerability to infection**.
- **Drug abuse** is linked to the top U.S. medical problems, including **heart disease, cancer, HIV/AIDS, and mental illness**.

HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, and Other Infectious Diseases

Nearly one-third of reported AIDS cases have been linked to **injection drug use**—heroin, cocaine, or any drug that abusers inject. One way that HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and other infectious diseases are spread is through the sharing of needles or other injection equipment. But it is not only injection drug users who risk contracting or spreading infections. The intoxicating effects of **all drugs of abuse affect judgment and decision making**—leading users to engage in behaviors that could have dire health consequences, including the spread of HIV.



Mental Health Effects

Drug abuse might affect an existing mental disorder or result in one. More than half of those who are addicted to drugs have also had some form of mental illness—either at the same time as their addiction or at some other point in their lives. This is probably not due to chance: drugs affect many of the same brain

systems that are responsible for mental disorders. There may also be common genetic and environmental causes of both. What we know from research is that long-lasting changes in the brain caused by chronic drug abuse may lead to **depression, aggression, paranoia, and hallucinations**.

Smoking

Cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, causing about 440,000 deaths per year in the U.S. alone. Smoking leads to **heart disease, lung cancer**, and other lung problems, such as **emphysema** and **chronic bronchitis**. Tobacco addiction is a direct result of **nicotine**—one of the many chemicals found in tobacco

products—which acts on receptors in the brain and the body. Tobacco smoke also affects other body systems, changing their functions and ultimately leading to disease. Prenatal exposure to tobacco can have long-lasting effects on the next generation; and even **second-hand smoke** is linked to diseases in those exposed.

Factivate—for Your Life

Get More Facts! Find out more about the medical consequences of drug abuse and addiction at:
www.scholastic.com/headsup
www.teens.drugabuse.gov
www.drugabuse.gov

Check Up! See a doctor for regular checkups. Be sure to mention if you abuse drugs—this is confidential information your doctor needs to know. A prescribed medication might interact badly with a drug of abuse.

Get Up! Do some type of physical activity every day for overall good health.

Eat Healthy! Eat balanced meals, limiting your intake of fats and sweets, to give your body the energy it needs.

Hydrate! Drink liquids throughout the day, especially while exercising. To nourish your body, reach for water instead of sugared drinks.

Cover Up! Wear protective gear and sunblock when outside to block damaging rays.

Speak Up! Talk to your parents or to another trusted adult about your health-related questions. Ask questions and insist on answers.