Multiple Substance Use

LENGTH 8–10 minutes

TO PREPARE Read the background information.

BACKGROUND

- According to the Centers for Disease Control, the use of more than one drug, also known as multiple substance use, is common. This includes when two or more substances are taken together or within a short time period, either intentionally or unintentionally.

- Intentional multiple substance use occurs when a person takes a drug to increase or decrease the effects of a different drug or wants to experience the effects of the combination.

- Unintentional multiple substance use occurs when a person takes drugs that have been mixed or cut with other substances, like fentanyl, without their knowledge.

- According to the Alcohol and Drug Foundation, multiple substance use can affect everyone differently.

DISCUSSION

- Whether intentional or not, mixing substances is generally not advised unless a doctor prescribes multiple drugs to assist a sick patient or one in recovery.

- The effects from combining drugs may be stronger or more unpredictable than one drug used alone—and can even be deadly.

- The dangers of multiple substance use also apply to prescription drugs. Always let your doctor know what drugs you are taking to prevent any adverse reactions with newly prescribed medications.

- The U.S. Food & Drug Administration recommends following directions and reading warnings on medication packaging.

- Store substances in a locked cabinet or in a location children cannot get to.

What combinations are considered multiple substances?

- An illegal drug and a legal drug
- A pair of prescription drugs
- A prescription drug and an illegal drug
- Alcohol and any drug
- A pair of over-the-counter drugs
Answer: All of these pairs can be considered multiple substances and require caution.

Should I check combinations of over-the-counter medicines?

- Over-the-counter medicines are presumed safe by most people, but should be checked for interactions.
- The Interactions Check at drugs.com is a resource for revealing interactions of two or more drugs.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration advises you to always take medicines as directed. It may not be safe to drive while taking some medications or a combination of medications.

Can you recognize the signs of an opioid overdose?

- No response to stimulation
- Lack of, slowed or infrequent breathing
- Deep snoring or gurgling
- Heavy, limp limbs
- Clammy, pale or ashen skin
- Slow, weak pulse

What to do if you think someone is overdosing:

- Call 911 immediately.
- Administer Naloxone (such as Narcan®), if available.
- Try to keep the person awake and breathing.
- Lay the person on his or her side to prevent choking.
- Stay with the person until emergency workers arrive.

According to the CDC, it may be hard to tell whether a person is high or experiencing an overdose. If you aren’t sure, it’s best to treat the situation like an overdose—you could save a life.

SUMMARY

- Knowing whether multiple substance use will produce adverse reactions can help prevent workplace and driving incidents.
- Always follow directions for use of prescription drugs and over-the-counter medication.
- View this one-minute multiple substance use safety video from Our Driving Concern Texas Employer Traffic Safety program:
  - LINK: https://youtu.be/23ChRIUob0M