

## Keeping Your Brain Safe

During the last module of *Brain Power! The NIDA Junior Scientists Program*, children are introduced to the concept of helpful medicines and what characteristics they have. Students learn that only a trusted adult should give medicines, and children can take only a small amount of the medicine. In some cases, physicians must prescribe the medicines. Finally, students learn that medicines are taken for a specific purpose, such as when they have a headache or sore throat, but can be harmful if taken incorrectly.

Then, students discuss two other substances: alcohol and nicotine. They discover that these substances are not medicines, and there are laws about consuming them, especially for kids. They are very powerful. Students learn that alcohol and nicotine are examples of drugs and are illegal for children. [Although nicotine is not considered a medicine, it can be used to aid in smoking cessation.]

Introducing the subject of harmful drugs at the end of the program is meant to pave the way for the second part of the curriculum, which is geared to students in second and third grades. The six modules in Part 2 discuss drugs in greater detail, as well as the effects they have on the brain. Through these modules, students learn even more about what they can do to keep their precious brains safe.

This module aligns with the National Science Education Standards: "unifying concepts and processes" and "science in personal and social perspectives" and stresses the importance of protecting your brain and body by doing what you can to keep them safe and healthy.

### Science at Home

Ask your child what his or her impressions were of the module. Ask if there are any questions you can answer. Now is a good time to correct any misconceptions your child may have about the differences between helpful medicines and harmful drugs.



## What Does Your Child Think?

Ask your child to write or draw one question or concern he or she may have about medicines and drugs.

### Additional Resources

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) — [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)  
301-443-1124

This Web site contains information about drug abuse and a section designed specifically for parents, teachers, and students. Publications and other materials are available free of charge.

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) — [www.health.org](http://www.health.org)  
1-800-729-6686

NCADI is the world's largest resource for information and materials concerning substance abuse. Many free publications are available here.

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI): For Kids Only  
[www.health.org/kidsarea/](http://www.health.org/kidsarea/)

NCADI is the world's largest resource for current information and materials concerning substance abuse. This section of the site is designed specifically for kids.

Neuroscience for Kids — <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/nic.html>

This Web site contains information on the brain, activities, experiments, pictures, and other resources for students and educators.

Friedman, D. *Focus on Drugs and the Brain*. Frederick, MD: Twenty-First Century Books, 1990. Part of the "Drug-Alert" series, this book gives a good overview of the brain, neurotransmission, the effects of drugs on the brain, and addiction.

DeStefano, S. and Neuhaus, D. *Focus on Medicines*. Frederick, MD: Twenty-First Century Books, 1990. Part of the "Drug-Alert" series, this book gives a good overview of medicines and how various medicines work with the body and brain to help heal.

McGinty, A. *Staying Healthy: Personal Safety (The Library of Healthy Living)*. New York, NY: Franklin Watts, Incorporated, 1999. Written for young children, this book is a comprehensive overview of the importance of personal safety.

Cosgrove, S. *Crickle-Crack (Serendipity Books)*. New York, NY: Price Stern Sloan Publishing, 2001. Crickle-Crack is the story of Squeakers, a young squirrel who is curious about a certain tree in the forest, even though he knows it is very dangerous.

