

Making Smart Choices: Evidence-Based Decisions for Teen Health

Grade Level: 9–12

Time: 1–2 class periods (90 minutes)

Introduction

This lesson engages high school students in evidence-based research using Consumer Health Ultimate to explore realistic teen health scenarios. Students analyze credible health information to distinguish facts from myths and make informed decisions despite peer or media influence. The activity builds health literacy, critical thinking and communication skills across disciplines.

Standards

A Standards Crosswalk is provided as an Appendix.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Locate and use credible consumer health reference articles
- Evaluate health-related choices using evidence rather than opinion or social pressure
- Apply research findings to realistic teen health scenarios
- Communicate health decisions clearly and responsibly

Materials

- Student devices with database access
- Consumer Health Ultimate database
- Student worksheet or digital doc (optional)

Essential Question

How can reliable health information help teens make better decisions in real-life situations?

Procedure

Introduction

1. **Warm-Up Prompt / Think-Pair-Share (5 minutes):** Where do teens usually get health advice? Friends, social media, influencers, family, ads? What could go wrong when decisions are based on misinformation or pressure?
2. **Mini-Lesson (5 minutes):** Briefly explain...
 - What Consumer Health Ultimate is (library database of complete articles from trustworthy sources)
 - How/why reference articles are different from blogs, TikTok videos or ads
 - How evidence-based information supports healthier choices

Main Activity: Teen Health Decision Challenge

Step 1: Scenario Assignment (5 minutes)

Divide students into small groups (2–4 students). Each group receives one realistic teen scenario or chooses from the list below. (Teachers can adapt or let students create their own scenarios.)

Sample Scenario Topics

1. **Stress and Sleep:** *You're sleeping 4–5 hours a night because of homework, sports and scrolling on your phone. But that's what your friends are doing, too.*
2. **Self-Diagnosing Online:** *You relate strongly to mental health posts on social media. You suspect you have anxiety, ADHD or depression without seeing a professional.*
3. **Diet and Nutrition:** *You're considering a restrictive diet you saw on social media for "quick results."*
4. **Online Privacy and Sharing:** *Friends pressure you to share personal photos or location information online.*
5. **Vaping:** *A friend says vaping is harmless and helps with stress.*
6. **Social Media and Mental Health:** *You feel pressure to stay online constantly and compare yourself to influencers.*
7. **After-Event Ride Pressure:** *After the big football game, friends plan to ride home with someone who has been drinking or using substances, and you feel pressured to go along.*
8. **Relationships:** *A friend or partner pressures you in a way that you're not comfortable with.*

Step 2: Research Using Consumer Health Ultimate (20–30 minutes)

Each group must find and use 2–3 Consumer Health Ultimate reference articles related to their scenario.

Research Requirements: Students must identify:

- Key health risks and benefits
- Short-term and long-term effects
- Mental, physical and social impacts

- Evidence-based recommendations from health professionals

Step 3: Evidence-Based Decision Framework (15-20 minutes)

Students complete a Decision Guide based on their research:

1. **The Health Issue:** What is the decision being considered?
2. **What the Evidence Says:** Summarize findings from Consumer Health Ultimate articles.
3. **Risks vs. Benefits:** Use evidence, not opinion.
4. **Outside Pressures:** Identify peer pressure, social media influence or myths.
5. **Healthy Decision:** What choice would you recommend and why?
6. **Reliable Sources:** Cite Consumer Health Ultimate articles used.

Step 4: Presentation & Discussion (15–20 minutes)

Groups Share...

- Their scenario
- Key evidence discovered
- Final recommended decision

Class Discussion Prompts

- Did any evidence surprise you?
- How did facts differ from what teens often hear online?
- How can you check health claims in the future?

Step 5: Connecting Back to the Essential Question (5 minutes)

Essential Question: How can reliable health information help teens make better decisions in real-life situations?

Sample Student Responses (Desired Outcomes)

- “Reliable health information helps you see the real risks, not just what people say or what looks normal online.”
- “When you know the facts, it’s easier to make a decision based on safety instead of peer pressure.”
- “Evidence shows long-term effects that people don’t usually talk about, which changes how serious the decision feels.”
- “Using trustworthy sources helps you realize some ‘common’ behaviors are actually risky.”
- “It gives you confidence to say no because you can explain your choice with facts, not just feelings.”
- “Reliable information helps you think ahead about consequences, not just what’s happening in the moment.”

- “It helps you separate myths from real health impacts, especially with things like vaping or drinking.”
- “Knowing the science behind the issue makes it easier to make choices that protect your mental and physical health.”
- “Evidence-based information helps you make decisions for yourself instead of copying what everyone else is doing.”
- “It helps you recognize when social media or friends are influencing your choices more than facts.”

Assessment Options

Formative

- Research notes
- Participation in discussion

Summative (Choose One)

- Written decision report
- Infographic or slide summarizing evidence
- Short PSA script promoting evidence-based teen health choices

Rubric Criteria

- Use of credible evidence
- Accuracy of health information
- Clear reasoning and decision-making
- Thoughtful reflection on teen influences

Extension Activities

- **Media Literacy Tie-In:** Compare a social media health claim to evidence found in Consumer Health Ultimate.
- **Personal Reflection:** Write about a health decision you might face and how evidence could help.
- **Cross-Curricular:** Link to science (brain development), English (argument writing) or civics (public health).

Standards Crosswalk

Summary: This activity integrates Common Core literacy, AASL information literacy and NHES health education standards by requiring students to research credible health information, evaluate influences on teen behavior, and apply evidence to realistic decision-making scenarios. The lesson supports interdisciplinary instruction and librarian-teacher collaboration.

Lesson Component	CCSS Alignment	AASL Alignment	NHES Alignment
Researching teen health topics using Consumer Health Ultimate reference articles	RI.9-10.1 / RI.11-12.1 Cite textual evidence	Inquire: Think, Create	Standard 1 Use functional health information
Identifying key risks, benefits and recommendations	RI.9-10.2 / RI.11-12.2 Determine central ideas	Curate: Think, Create	Standard 1 Use functional health information
Evaluating health claims and separating evidence from myths or peer pressure	RI.9-10.8 / RI.11-12.8 Evaluate claims and reasoning	Inquire: Think	Standard 2 Analyze influences
Gathering information from authoritative, credible sources	W.9-10.8 / W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information	Curate: Think, Create	Standard 3 Access valid information
Group collaboration and discussion of scenarios	SL.9-10.1 / SL.11-12.1 Collaborative discussions	Collaborate: Create, Share	Standard 4 Interpersonal communication
Developing an evidence-based health decision or recommendation	W.9-10.1 / W.11-12.1 Argument writing	Engage: Think	Standard 5 Decision-making
Presenting findings to peers	SL.9-10.4 / SL.11-12.4 Present information clearly	Collaborate: Share	Standard 4 Interpersonal communication
Reflecting on real-world teen health choices	W.9-10.10 / W.11-12.10 Routine writing/reflection	Explore: Think	Standard 7 Healthy behaviors
Optional PSA, infographic or advocacy product	W.9-10.6 / W.11-12.6 Use technology to publish	Engage: Share	Standard 8 Advocacy