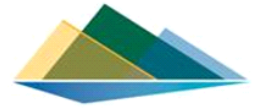


#drugsandalcohol
#publichealth5-19service



DRUGS AND ALCOHOL FACTSHEET

This factsheet will provide you with information and advice about drugs and alcohol, their effects on the body, staying safe and links to helpful websites.

Why do people use drugs?

People use drugs for a number of reasons such as:

- to have a laugh
- to make them feel more confident
- to fit in with people
- to make them look hard
- to fill time
- because their mates do
- to get away from their problems.

“I turned to drink and drugs to try and make things better but really they were just making things a lot worse. I got into trouble everywhere I went, got into fights for no reason and hurt myself by punching walls.”

What are drugs?

A drug is a substance that can change someone's mood or behaviour. This includes alcohol and prescription or over the counter painkillers such as Paracetamol, Ibuprofen, Nurofen etc.

Uppers speed up your body and give you extra energy. These include:

- cocaine, speed (phet), crack, ecstasy

Downers slow down your body. These include:

- alcohol, blues, heroin, cannabis

Round the benders/trippy drugs are mind-altering drugs that cause hallucinations. These include:

- LSD (acid), magic mushrooms, ketamine, cannabis

How will drugs affect me?

The effect of a drug will depend on:

- the type of drug
- the quantity
- the method by which you take it e.g. inhaling, injecting
- who you are with and your surrounding
- how you are feeling and your general health

Uppers can:

- cause tiredness and depression days after taking the drugs
- result in possible memory loss
- put a strain on your heart with long term use
- complicate mental health problems with long-term use

Downers (including alcohol) can:

- result in possible memory loss
- cause panic attacks
- make you aggressive
- damage your heart and liver with long-term use

Round the Benders can:

- cause tiredness and lack of energy
- make you feel paranoid and anxious
- result in memory loss
- cause panic attacks
- result in bad 'trips' or hallucinations which cannot be prevented
- complicate mental health problems with long-term use

“My mates introduced me to weed. I thought I was cool at the time, just having it once or twice a week. Then it interrupted my school work – I couldn’t concentrate and I was falling asleep in class.”

Are ‘legal highs’ safe?

No. Legal highs have potential risks. Some of them are new drugs, so the risk of taking them is unknown. Once research has identified the risks, these could potentially become a Class A, B or C drug. Mephedrone was a ‘legal high’, but after a number of deaths linked to the drug, this was made illegal in April 2010 and classified a Class B drug. If you are going to use legal highs, or drink alcohol, please ensure that you take precautions to stay safe.

Is there any such thing as a harmless drug?

There is no such thing as a harmless drug - all drugs are potentially harmful, including alcohol. However, there are ways that you can reduce some of the risks.

What does Class A, B and C mean?

Drugs are divided into Class A, B and C according to the harm they can do.

Class A drugs are classed as the most harmful/addictive. The penalty for possessing drugs varies on the class of the drug and the circumstances. The table on the next page shows the different types of drugs, their class and the maximum penalties that you could face if you are found in possession of these drugs. The information is taken from www.gov.uk/penalties-drug-possession-dealing

Class	Drug	Possession	Supply and production
A	Crack cocaine, cocaine, ecstasy (MDMA), heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, methadone, methamphetamine (crystal meth)	Up to 7 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both	Up to life in prison, an unlimited fine or both
B	Amphetamines, barbiturates, cannabis, codeine, ketamine, methylphenidate (Ritalin), synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones (e.g. mephedrone, methoxetamine)	Up to 5 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both	Up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both
C	Anabolic steroids, benzodiazepines (diazepam), gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB), gamma-butyrolactone (GBL), piperazines (BZP), khat	Up to 2 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both (except anabolic steroids - it's not an offence to possess them for personal use)	Up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both
Temporary class drugs*	Some methylphenidate substances (ethylphenidate, 3,4-dichloromethylphenidate (3,4-DCMP), methylnaphthidate (HDMP-28), isopropylphenidate (IPP or IPPD), 4-methylmethylphenidate, ethylnaphthidate, propylphenidate) and their simple derivatives	None, but police can take away a suspected temporary class drug	Up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both
Psychoactive substances	Things that cause hallucinations, drowsiness or changes in alertness, perception of time and space, mood or empathy with others e.g. laughing gas	None, unless you're in prison	Up to 7 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both

*The government can ban new drugs for 1 year under a 'temporary banning order' while they decide how the drugs should be classified.

What about alcohol?

It is illegal for a shop or pub to sell alcohol to someone under the age of 18. Over the age of 18, it is legal to buy alcohol from shops and buy and drink alcohol in pubs.

Alcohol is measured in units. One unit is:

- Half a pint of beer/cider/lager
- 1 small glass of wine
- 1 single measurement of spirits e.g. vodka, whisky, gin

The NHS recommends that adult men and women shouldn't drink more than 14 units per week on a regular basis. These units shouldn't be 'saved up' over the week and drunk in one go – this is called binge drinking. Alcohol affects people in different ways, depending on your sex, weight, height and many other factors. This means that alcohol may have a very different effect on you than it does on a friend.

It can be tempting to try and keep up with other people, but if you are going to drink alcohol, it's important to drink responsibly and only drink what you know you can handle.

Did you know?

- alcohol dehydrates your body, so it's important to drink lots of water or non-alcoholic drinks in between alcoholic drinks
- coffee will not sober you up – it might make you feel less tired, but only time will get alcohol out of your body. On average, it takes your body one hour to process one unit of alcohol – so if you drink 3 pints of beer, that's 6 units and 6 hours for the alcohol to leave your body
- it can be addictive
- alcohol can make you aggressive and you are more likely to be involved in violence
- it can make you do things you wouldn't usually do and take more risks, such as walking home on your own late at night, or having unprotected sex

“I started getting into a lot more trouble and drinking every day. I'm glad now that I haven't drank for nearly 2 weeks because when I was drinking every day I was only doing my own head in, messing my life up.”

How can I stay safe?

It is important that you keep yourself safe at all times. If you are going to use drugs or drink alcohol make sure you are in safe surroundings, with friends, and use harm reduction advice such as:

- eat properly
- keep yourself hydrated (drink plenty of water)
- don't drink alcohol while taking drugs
- don't mix drugs

It is always a good idea to learn the recovery position; this could potentially save a friend's life if they have a bad experience.

What can I do to help myself?

If you take drugs or are feeling pressured or tempted to try drugs, there are ways you can help yourself:

- talk to friends
- talk to family
- find a hobby, such as the gym, sports or art
- set goals and objectives for the future
- socialise more – especially with friends who do not use drugs
- find other things you enjoy to keep you busy
- keep a drink/drugs diary
- contact your local alcohol and drugs service

VISIT THESE USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.talktofrank.com/

A website that gives honest information and advice about drugs

www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/

NHS Choices webpage providing facts around alcohol and staying healthy

www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/the-effects-of-drugs/

NHS Choices webpage providing information on the effects of drugs & where to find support

www.cadas.co.uk/

Cumbria alcohol drug advisory service website, has information for young people