

A close-up photograph of a single, white, round tablet. The tablet has a slightly textured surface and a faint, embossed logo in the center. The logo appears to be a stylized, circular emblem with some internal details, though it is not clearly defined. The tablet is set against a light, neutral background.

Living with drugs



This booklet provides basic information about drugs and gives you the facts you need to stay safe.

The reasons for taking both legal and illegal drugs are different for different people. They may be used for relaxation, to increase confidence or to enhance performance or stamina. There may be pressure from others to take drugs, or drugs may very well be part of the culture or environment you have grown up in.

It is not always easy to find the information you need to make an informed decision about the use of drugs. This booklet tells you about some of the wide ranging effects and risks associated with drugs use.

At the back of the booklet you will find details of services' in Hammersmith & Fulham that can help you, or someone you know, with a substance misuse problem. We encourage you to ask for their support, or for the answers to any questions you have that are not covered in this booklet.



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Cannabis



Usually mixed with tobacco and smoked in a spliff or pipe. Can be put in tea or cakes.

Known as

Blow, pot, grass, hash, skunk, weed, narb.

Effects

Sense of calmness, relaxed feeling, hilarity, talkativeness, happiness, increased appetite, slower reaction times.

Confusion, anxiety, panic, paranoia, nausea, impaired memory, balance and coordination.

Risks

Can affect motivation; making people boring, lifeless, isolated and depressed, it also makes it harder to learn and concentrate.

Increased risk of throat cancer or lung diseases, frequent use of cannabis can lead to fertility problems in men and women. Can affect peoples' mental health.



Cannabis is a Class C drug – it is still illegal.

Alcohol



Is seen by many as a more socially acceptable drug; however it is blamed for contributing to all kinds of problems, from violent crime to car-related deaths.

Known as

Booze, bevy.

Effects

Increased sociability and confidence, emotions are heightened, inhibitions lowered.

Alcohol is a depressant, memory loss, vomiting, dehydration, uncoordinated, slurred speech and loss of balance.

Risks

Coordination and judgement can be affected leading to accidental injury and victimisation (e.g. rape).

Long term use can lead to liver, heart and stomach problems. Mixing with other drugs can be very dangerous, high psychological and physical dependence potential.

Tranquillisers



Usually taken orally but they can be injected or inserted up the anus.

Known as

Valium, downers, benzos, jellies.

Effects

Promotes sense of relaxation and calmness. Can relieve tension and anxiety, muscle relaxant.

Dizziness, uncoordinated and slurring words, forgetfulness, confusion and drowsiness.

Risks

Memory impairment, delirium, can slow down reactions causing accidents.

Tolerance builds up quickly, very high potential of physical dependence. Overdose can happen and withdrawal can cause fits.

Mixing it with alcohol or other drugs is extremely dangerous.

Injecting is very dangerous. The chalk in tablets causes collapsed veins, whilst gel capsules can be fatal when the gel solidifies inside the blood vessels.



Heroin



Usually smoked or injected or if high purity, it can be snorted.

Pure heroin comes as a white powder; street heroin can be anything from off white to brown.

Known as

Smack, brown, H.

Effects

A detachment from unpleasant feelings, contentment and extreme happiness, drowsiness, euphoric rush, pain relief.

Vomiting, constipation, suppresses sexual feelings.

Risks

Tolerance can develop quickly leading to risk of dependency, risks associated with injecting, poor appetite and weight loss.

The impurities in street heroin may also cause other health problems such as blood poisoning, heart disease and lung disorders.

Risk of overdose, which can be fatal.



Ketamine



Usually injected, snorted or swallowed.

Produced legally it comes in liquid form; illegally it comes as a grainy white powder or tablet.

Known as

K, special K, vitamin K.

Effects

Increased energy, 'floating' sensations, numbness, visual and auditory hallucinations.

Jitteriness, intense fear, anxiety, panic, nausea, difficulty moving and speaking, blurred vision, delusions.

Risks

Hallucinations can be confusing or disturbing.

Risk of accidental injury, flashbacks, unpredictable behaviour and violence, depression, complicates any current mental health issues, can induce mild schizophrenia, seizures, long term memory loss.

Dangerous if mixed with others substances.

Magic Mushrooms



After picking, mushrooms are usually eaten raw, cooked, made into a drink, or dried for later consumption.

Known as

Mushies, shrooms, agari.

Effects

Confidence and sense of insight, sounds, colours and objects become distorted.

Delusions, intense fear, anxiety, paranoia and panic, nausea, dizziness, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Risks

Risk of accidents, risk of picking and consuming poisonous mushrooms.

Become disorientated increasing the risk of accidental injury, unpredictable behaviour, delirium, PCP psychosis* and violence, complicates any current mental health issues, users can get a 'flashback'.

*Phencyclidine: a synthetic drug manufactured in the 1950's as an anaesthetic. It is unique because of its power to produce psychosis indistinguishable from schizophrenia.

LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide)



Normally comes in a tiny square sheet of paper, but can come in liquid capsule form. Taken orally.

Known as

Acid, trips, tabs, microdots.

Effects

Confidence and sense of insight, sense of movement and time may speed up or slow down; colour and sound may be distorted.

Hallucinations can be disturbing, intense fear, anxiety, paranoia, panic and depression.

Risks

Accidents can occur during altered states, unpredictable behaviour, delirium, PCP psychosis and violence, complicates any current mental health issues, users can get a 'flashback'.

The experience is known as a trip, it lasts about 12 hours.



Amphetamines



Usually dabbed onto the gums or snorted in lines. Can be rolled up in a cigarette paper and swallowed, called a 'speedbomb'. It can also be mixed in drinks or injected.

The powder is off-white/pinkish; the 'base' form is purer and feels like putty. On prescription they are small white pills.



Known as

Speed, whiz.

Effects

Quickens heart beat and breathing rate, increases confidence, alertness, energy, appetite is suppressed.

Can become tense, anxious, irritable, restless, increases aggression, insomnia.

Risks

Tiredness, irritability and depression can last for some days. Memory and concentration can be affected. Results in dehydration and weight loss. Crash withdrawal, risks associated with injecting.

Long term users may become dependent and may experience paranoia or psychosis.

Ecstasy



Usually taken orally in a tablet form.

Known as

E, doves (MDMA & MDA have similar risks).

Effects

Euphoria, sense of well being, contentedness and general feelings of happiness. Sensations enhanced, inhibitions lowered.

Lessened desire to eat and sleep, nausea, anxiety, panic attacks, paranoia.

Risks

Use has been linked to liver, kidney and heart problems, depression, personality change, memory loss, paranoia, weight loss.

Unpredictable content of tablets, crash withdrawal.

Risk of overheating and dehydration which can be fatal.

Methylamphetamine



Comes in tablet, powder or crystalline forms. Taken orally, snorted, injected or smoked.

Known as

Crystal Meth, ice, glass, yaba.

Effects

Quickens heart beat and breathing rate, increases confidence, alertness, energy, appetite is suppressed.

Can become tense, anxious, irritable, restless, increases aggression, insomnia.

Risks

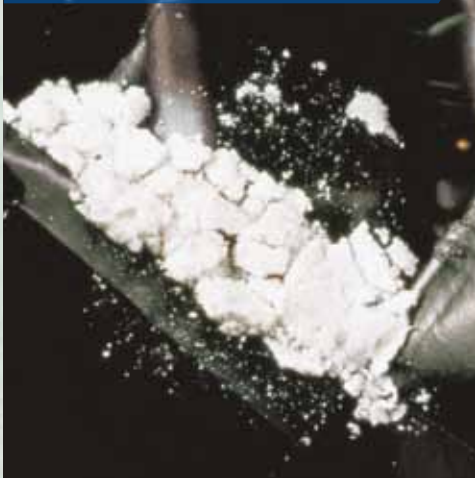
Tiredness, irritability and depression can last for some days. Memory and concentration can be affected, dehydration and weight loss, crash withdrawal, risks associated with injecting.

Quick to develop a dependency. Can experience paranoia or psychosis, become agitated, paranoid, confused and violent.

Crystal Meth is one of a group of stimulant drugs called amphetamines.



Cocaine



Cocaine powder is a white powder that's usually snorted; it cannot easily be smoked but can be injected.

Known as

Charlie, snow, coke.

Effects

Excitement and euphoria, increased confidence, alertness, sociability and concentration. Lessened desire to eat and sleep.

Appetite loss, insomnia, and depression.

Risks

Can cause heart problems and chest pain, confusion, paranoia, low moods, flu like symptoms, tolerance, agitated delirium and psychosis, loss of sex drive, complicates any current mental health issues, crash withdrawal.

Snorting can damage membranes in the nose.

Crack



Usually smoked in a pipe, glass tube, plastic bottle or in foil.

Known as

Rock, wash, stone, bones, white.

Effects

Effects are similar to cocaine, but much more intense.

Risks

Because of its intensity, crack use can be difficult to control, smoking it can cause serious lung damage and fatal heart problems.

Frequent use can lead to paranoia, violent mood swings, poor physical health, agitated delirium and psychosis it also complicates any current mental health issues.

Crack is a small waxy lump, which makes cracking noise when burnt, normally the size of a raisin.



Solvents



Usually sniffed from a cloth, a sleeve or a plastic bag. Gas can be squirted into the back of the throat.

Known as

Lighter fluid, butane, glue, correcting fluids.

Effects

Euphoria, symptoms of drunkenness, laughter, lack of inhibition.

Nausea, drowsiness, hallucinations, uncoordinated, impaired judgement, severe headaches, red rash around the mouth.

Risks

Unconsciousness, depression, confusion and blackouts, brain, liver and kidney damage.

Inhaling volatile substances can cause sudden death by suffocation, heart failure or accidents.

Anabolic Steroids



Known as

Trade Names: Anavar, Sustanon, Dianabol.

Effects

Increased muscle mass, strength, stamina, confidence and reduced recovery time after exercising.

Increased aggression. Can cause acne and mood swings.

Risks

Disorders of the liver and kidneys, increased risk of heart attack and strokes. Can cause stunted growth in teenagers who are not yet their full height.

Men risk infertility, shrinking of testicles, breast growth. Women risk developing a deeper voice and increased body hair.

Khat



Known as

Guat, chat.

Effects

Euphoria, alertness, talkativeness.

Appetite loss, insomnia, anxiety and aggression.

Risks

High blood pressure, heart problems, sexual problems like impotence, mouth cancers.

Complicates any current mental health issues, can cause paranoid and psychotic reactions.

Withdrawal, lethargy and/or mild depression.



Problems associated with drug taking

Health problems

(see individual drugs listed).

Problems at work, lateness, lethargy, lack of concentration, failed drug test, lack of motivation, increased risk of accidents.

Use during pregnancy may cause premature birth and babies may also temporarily suffer tremor and distress.

Becoming withdrawn, losing interest in personal hygiene or appearance.

Dependence: it makes things worse if you cannot do without it.

Financial problems, spending more, earning less.

Legal problems, all drugs are subject to The Misuse of Drugs Act.

There is no completely safe way to use drugs but you can take steps to reduce some of the risks:

- ✓ Think about your surroundings. If you are going to use drugs; try to ensure you are with people that you can trust and within a safe environment.
- ✓ Have days off between using drugs. Buying in bulk with the intention of saving some for the next day won't work, the reality is that you will just end up using it all.
- ✓ Break up your pattern of use and put off the first use for as long as possible, go for small doses and pace yourself.
- ✓ Often drugs increase your body temperature, this can lead to overheating. Heavy sweating may be a sign that your body is too hot. Drink water, hold your wrists under cold water, take time out and cool down.
- ✓ It is important to eat well. Good energy foods are pasta, rice, potatoes and bananas. If you find that you cannot eat, then try to use nutritious vitamin drinks and take multi vitamins and minerals. Remember to drink water when you are using; fruit juices are also good as they help replace vitamins in the body.
- ✓ You need sleep to recharge yourself. Use sleep and detox teas on the days you are not using to help you recover and reduce cravings, Camomile tea is also good for this.
- ✓ Set yourself a budget.
- ✓ If you feel sick, don't lock yourself in the toilet, you could lose consciousness or choke on your own vomit. Tell a friend who can stay with you.
- ✓ Do practice safe sex.
- ✗ Don't mix different drugs, especially with alcohol.
- ✗ Avoid anxiety and paranoia by pacing yourself and keeping your dose level down. When you feel anxious, chill out for a bit, try deep breathing (breathing in slowly for the count of four and out for the count of six is generally a good method) and take regular exercise.
- ✗ Drugs can make you feel depressed and even suicidal. The inability to find pleasure in everyday things can lead to lethargy and reinforces the desire to use. To combat these feelings, do things that you enjoy, or think you may enjoy and try to laugh. Laughter reduces stress and boosts your immune system.
- ✓ If you are trying to cut down or stop try to switch your thinking. Remind yourself of the reasons why, friends who don't use can help you through this time. Take dealers' numbers off your phone. Plan to do something else at the time of day you usually take drugs, physical exercise and acupuncture can help you relax. Avoid any places, people or events that remind you of your drug use. Give yourself a reward (that isn't about drugs) for staying away.



Smoking

Cans and aluminium foil carry the risk of aluminium poisoning, bacteria and paint fumes. Plastic bottles increase the chance of water getting into the lungs and of you inhaling plastic fumes.

If you must do heroin, smoke it rather than snort it. You are four times as likely to overdose from snorting heroin as you are from smoking it.

The risk of infection increases if you have dry or cracked lips, always use lip balm, drinking water will also help to prevent cracked lips.

Do not use other peoples' or 'house' pipes. Tuberculosis can be passed on in this way, also poorly ventilated rooms can add to the risk.

If you smoke you can reduce the risks to your throat, chest and lungs by not holding smoke in your lungs or inhaling too deeply. Try not to hold your breathe as this can lead to an increased chance of pockets of air being pushed to the heart, which will cause heart failure.

Snorting

Don't rack out your lines on any available surface; you may also break up any germs or viruses surviving after poor cleaning.

Using a nasal wash of luke warm water can help reduce the risk of infection and minimise damage to the nose.

Do not snort on a daily basis, it can mess your face, sinuses, teeth and increases the risk of cartilage damage.

If you are getting problems, go to a doctor and have a break; a sinus infection can easily become chronic if left untreated.

Do not try to treat the damage done with antiseptic sprays, unless your GP instructs you to. Some of the over-the-counter sprays can cause extra damage on an already sensitive area.

Sharing straws and notes should be considered a high-risk activity. It is a factor



in the transmission of Hepatitis C as the virus can be transmitted in nasal mucous as well as blood.

Do not use bank notes as they may have been used before and could be contaminated with blood products.

Injecting

Always use clean needles, spoons, water and filters; sharing injecting equipment runs the risk of transmitting blood-borne viruses, Hepatitis C & HIV.

Injecting can cause vein damage, ulcers and gangrene. Frequent injecting can lead to problems including thrombosis, blocked veins leading to loss of blood circulation in limbs, boils, abscesses, blood poisoning and skin infections.

Repeated injecting into the same vein or poor injecting techniques can cause the vein to collapse.

Avoid injecting on your own. If you overdose nobody will be there to help you.

For a free needle exchange, information on safer injecting and access to a Blood Borne Viruses Nurse contact Druglink.



The Old Coach House

103a Devonport Road
W12 8PB.

Tel: 020 8749 6799

Open Access:

Monday to Friday: 9.00am - 5.00pm
(Except Wednesday, when closed
between 12.00pm - 2.00pm)

BBV Nurse: Tuesday 11.00am - 3.30pm

Overdose, in an emergency

If someone is showing severe signs of overdose and is unconscious

- Don't panic
- Check for signs of overdose:
 - unconsciousness
 - problems breathing
 - choking or gurgling
- Call the person's name, pinch their ear, then poke their chest.

If the person responds, keep an eye on them and call an ambulance if necessary. If they do not respond:

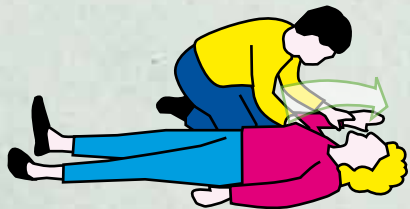
- Lift their chin and check to see if they are breathing by listening close to their nose and mouth and looking at their chest.
- Dial 999 right away and ask for an ambulance.

If you are worried about the police coming, don't mention drugs when you dial 999. Tell them you've found someone unconscious and explain what has happened when the ambulance arrives.

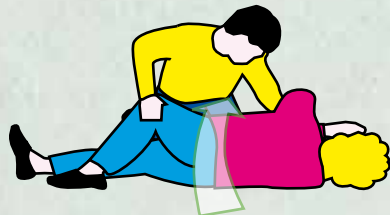
Make sure there is no shouting or panic in the background when you dial 999 to reduce the chances of the police coming.

- Make sure there is nothing stuck in their throat.
- Put the person on their side in the recovery position (*see over page for how to do this*).
- Stay with them until the ambulance comes. If you can, tell the ambulance crew what they have taken.

The recovery position



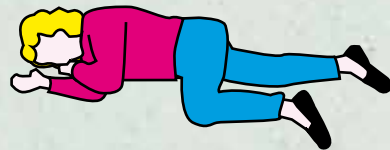
1. Straighten the person's legs. Put their right hand by the head as if they are waving.



4. Turn the person on their side by pushing down on the knee.



2. Put the left arm across the chest, so that the back of the hand rests against the cheek.
3. Hold the hand in place and lift up the left knee.



5. Make final adjustments and make them as comfortable as possible.

Contacts

Local and national contacts are listed. You are encouraged to contact them if:

- You are using drugs and need help to stop using or for information on minimising health risks.
- You have stopped using drugs and need support to stay clean.
- You are seeking support for a friend or relative.

What ever your reason for making contact, you will be treated with respect.

The information you give will be kept confidential.



Druglink

Druglink

The Old Coach House
103a Devonport Road,
London W12 8PB
Tel: 020 8749 6799

Druglink supports drug users, their family and friends. They offer a free needle exchange, a specific stimulant service, key working and a BBV nurse.

Open access:

Monday to Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm,
except Wednesday, when closed between
12.00 - 2.00pm.

BBV Nurse: Tuesday 11.00am - 3.30pm



CAPS

Community Drug & Alcohol Service (CDAS)

Crowther Market
282 North End Road,
London SW6 1NH
020 7381 7766

CDAS is mainly for opiate users and offers a drop-in service for new clients, a gateway to other health services, detoxification, substitute prescribing, harm minimisation and one to one counselling.

Drop-in:
Monday to Friday 9:30 – 11:30

Cocaine Anonymous

Tel: 0800 612 0225
www.cauk.org.uk

Helpline offering advice, support and information to current and former users, their families, friends and professionals.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Tel: 0845 769 7555
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Helpline offering advice, support and information to current and former users, their families, friends and professionals.

Frank

Tel: 0800 776 600
24 hours a day
www.talktofrank.com

Free and confidential advice about any drugs issue.

Talking Parents

020 8960 0880

Provides confidential support and information to anyone who is worried about someone close to them using drugs

Release

020 7729 9904
www.release.org.uk

Confidential helpline providing advice on drug use and legal issues surrounding the subject.

If you would like any part of this document interpreted into your own language or produced in large print or Braille, please telephone 020 8753 7777

www.lbhf.gov.uk

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