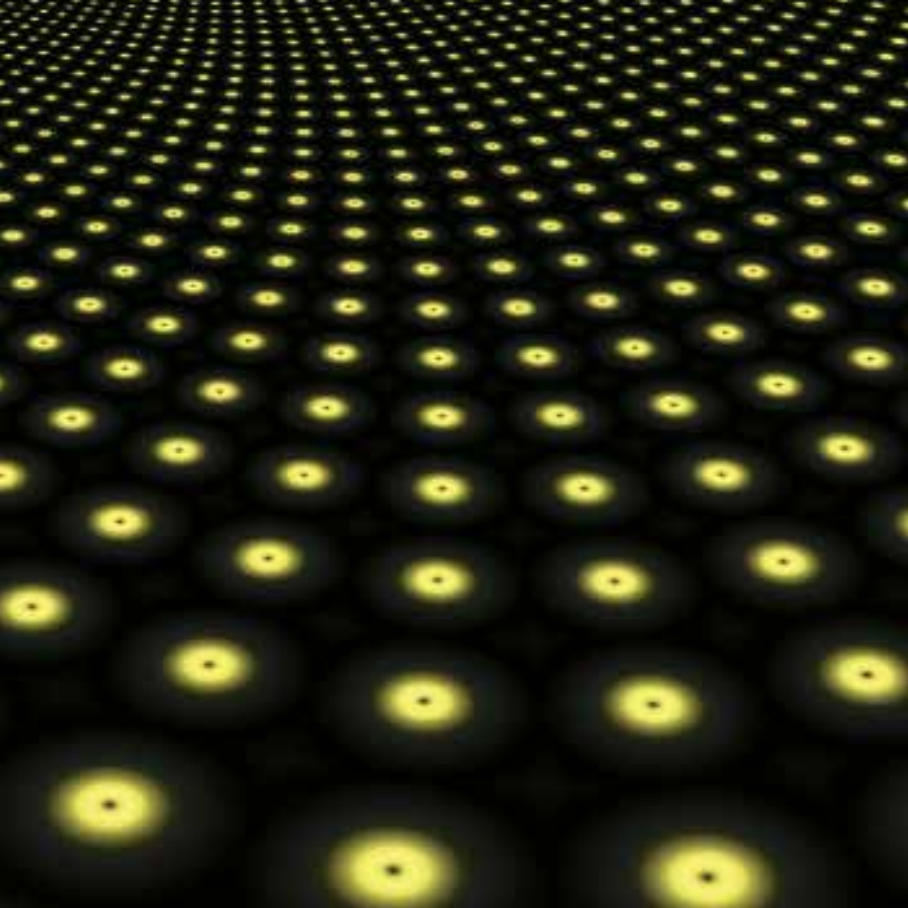


# DRUGS



// **STAYING SAFE**  
// **ADVICE & INFORMATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**



Growing up can be tough - always under pressure from you friends and family to do the right thing - look right, sound right and behave right.

But, as a young person, what is the 'right' when it comes to drugs and alcohol - should you take that white powder, or neck that pill.

What's in it, how will it make you feel, what are the risks?

The only way to avoid the risks of using drugs and alcohol is to not use them at all. But if you are thinking about, or are already using drugs and alcohol, it is important to learn as much as you can about the substances you are using.

This booklet provides you with clear, non-judgemental information about some of the most commonly used legal and illegal substances, including:

- Alcohol
- Amphetamine
- Cannabis
- Cocaine
- Ecstasy
- Ketamine
- Legal Highs
- Solvents
- Mephedrone

The final section is called 'staying safe.' It includes information about mixing drugs and alcohol, feeling unwell, and looking after yourselves and your mates.

Remember, there are new substances coming out all the time, make sure you do your own research before you make a decision. There are numerous websites and forums out there - some bad, some good. So keep up-to-date, stay informed and stay safe.

# ALCOHOL

Alcohol is a chemical called Ethanol. It is produced by brewing grains or fruits containing sugar, with water and yeast.

It comes in various forms such as lager, wine, cider or vodka.

The amount of alcohol in a drink is measured in units. Different drinks have a different number of units.

The number of units in a bottle or can of alcohol is printed on the label or packaging.

## → The effects of alcohol

Can slow down your brain which, in small amounts, can make you feel relaxed and sociable.

Can cause slurred speech, blurred vision, confusion, loss of co-ordination, and heightened emotions, the more you drink.

## → The problems with alcohol

Can damage your liver, stomach, kidneys, brain, muscles, skin and bones and causes cancer.

Can cause impotence (brewer's droop), infertility (shooting blanks), shrink the testicles, and grow breasts, in men.

May cause loss of periods, infertility (can't have a baby), and fat redistribution, in women.

Can cause addiction.

Can result in unconsciousness and sometimes death, if you drink a lot very quickly.

Young people, under 16, should not drink alcohol at all as this can damage developing organs. The best advice is not to drink alcohol until you're 18.

When over 18, men & women should drink no more than 14 units a week, spread evenly across a few days with a couple of alcohol free days.

## → Alcohol and the law

If you are under 18 it is against the law:

For anyone to sell you alcohol or for an adult to try and buy it on your behalf.

For you to buy alcohol, attempt to buy alcohol, or to be sold alcohol.

For you to drink alcohol in licensed premises, with one exception - 16 and 17 year-olds accompanied by an adult can drink (but not buy) beer, wine, and cider with a table meal in a pub or restaurant.

# AMPHETAMINE

## → Amphetamine

Amphetamine sulphate is a stimulant, commonly known as 'speed', which normally comes as a grey, dirty-white or pinkish powder.

## → The effects of amphetamines

Can cause feelings of energy and alertness, suppressing hunger and reducing the need to sleep.

Can speed up your heartbeat and breathing.

Can also cause anxiety, paranoia, irritability, twitchiness and insomnia.

## → The problems with amphetamines

Can lead to tolerance, meaning you have to take more to get the same effect.

Excessive use can lead to psychosis (loss of contact with reality), chest pain, heart problems and high blood pressure.

Can cause something called formication, which is the excessive itching and scratching of the skin, leading to skin infections.

The purity of some amphetamines can be as low as 5%.

## → Amphetamines and the law

Amphetamines are illegal, Class B drugs.

Possession of Class B drugs carries a maximum sentence of 5 years' imprisonment and a fine.

Supplying (selling or giving away) carries a maximum sentence of 14 years' imprisonment and a fine.

# CANNABIS

Cannabis comes from a plant called Cannabis Sativa.

Normally comes in a solid brown lump called hash (the resin scraped from the plant), or the dried flowers of the plant, known as grass, weed or Skunk.

The main chemical in cannabis is called THC (Tetra-Hydro-Cannabinol) which is the bit that makes you feel trippy. Different types of cannabis have different levels of THC.

It is normally smoked, rolled with tobacco in cigarette papers, or in a pipe or bong, but it can also be eaten.

## → The effects of Cannabis

Can make you feel relaxed, trippy, talkative and giggly.

Can make you feel tired, lazy and sleepy.

Can make colours, music and taste seem more intense.

## → Problems with Cannabis

Can cause paranoia, anxiety and panic attacks.

In some young people cannabis can bring on mental health problems. The

earlier you start smoking cannabis the more likely you are to have problems with it.

Can cause lung damage if smoked.

Can become a habit and lead to a lack of motivation and problems concentrating at school or work.

## → Cannabis and the law

Cannabis is an illegal, Class B drug. It is illegal to have, sell, grow or give away.

If you are under-18 and caught with cannabis your parents or guardian will be contacted, you could get a reprimand and possibly a referral to a Youth Offending Team.

If you are over-18, a first-time offence will usually get you a 'cannabis warning,' a second offence will get you an on-the-spot fine, and a third offence will result in prosecution and a criminal record.

There are products that you can buy in some shops which claim to have the same effects as cannabis (Spice, Black Mamba, etc.), but these can also be harmful and may be illegal.

# COCAINE

Cocaine is a substance obtained from the leaves of the coca plant. It normally comes in a white powder form

The purity of cocaine can vary greatly throughout the UK, from between 15-55%.

## → The effects of cocaine

Can cause an energy rush, and feelings of exhilaration, confidence and wellbeing.

Can also cause effects like edginess, paranoia, anxiety and shaking.

## → The problems with cocaine

Cocaine is normally snorted through a rolled up note or straw. The cocaine and the chemicals it is mixed with are acid and can burn or damage your nose.

The note or straw you use may have been up others peoples' noses and can be covered in snot, viruses and germs.

The initial effects of cocaine only last between 15 and 30 minutes. Using again and again to achieve the same effect can lead to tolerance, where you have to use more and more to get the same buzz and, further down the line, addiction.

Cocaine increase blood pressure, heart rate and body temperature.

Using cocaine increases the risk of stroke or a heart attack.

## → Cocaine and the law

Cocaine is an illegal, Class A drug.

Possession of Class A drugs carries a maximum sentence of 7 years imprisonment and/a fine.

Supplying (selling or giving away) carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment and a fine.

# ECSTASY

The active chemical in Ecstasy is MDMA, or to give it its full chemical name, 3,4 methylenedioxyamphetamine.

MDMA usually comes in tablet form, known as 'ecstasy', or powder, known as 'MDMA powder.'

Tablets come in various shapes and colours. MDMA powder usually comes in white or off-white crystals or powder. But remember, not all tablets claiming to be ecstasy or powder claiming to be MDMA, actually contain any real MDMA.

## → The effects of MDMA

Can cause an initial rush, jaw clenching, nausea, and nervousness.

Can increase energy levels and give a warm 'loved-up' huggy feeling.

Can cause sounds, colours, and feelings to be more intense.

## → The problems with MDMA

MDMA can cause you to overheat, particularly if you are jumping up and down (sometimes called dancing!) in a nightclub and don't drink enough liquid, take a break, or get some fresh air.

MDMA causes your body to retain water (you can't pee!) which alters your body's chemical balance. If you also drink a lot of water, this can cause your brain to swell.

Deaths from ecstasy have often been caused by drinking either not enough or too much water. Your body needs about a pint of fluid - water, isotonic drink or fruit juice - an hour, to function properly in a hot environment.

MDMA normally takes half an hour to an hour to start working, but can take longer. Being impatient and taking more can increase the dangers.

The comedown from MDMA can leave you feeling tired and depressed for a few days afterwards.

## → MDMA and the law

MDMA is an illegal, class A drug.

Possession of Class A drugs carries a maximum sentence of 7 years imprisonment and/or a fine.

Supplying (selling or giving away) carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment and a fine.



# KETAMINE

Ketamine is an anaesthetic that comes in the form of a clear liquid, tablets, or powder ranging in colour from off-white to light brown.

## → The effects of Ketamine

The effects of ketamine vary depending on your environment. In small doses it normally acts as a stimulant, boosting your energy levels, and making you feel high and trippy.

Larger doses can cause a strange 'out-of-body' effect, with hallucinations, feelings of calm and serenity, distorted reality, panic attacks, unpleasant feelings and fear.

These feelings can last up to 90 minutes.

The out-of-body experience is known as being in a 'K hole'.

Physical effects can include loss of control over your body, loss of coordination, difficulty speaking, moving, hearing and seeing (delirium), numbness and nausea.

## → The problems with ketamine

Obviously, if you are having an out-of-body experience and can't move your arms and legs then you're particularly at risk, especially in unfamiliar surroundings.

Because ketamine is an anaesthetic and numbs your body you can't feel pain as much as you would normally, so you can injure yourself without realising.

Regularly using a lot of ketamine can cause serious bladder problems, with severe pain and difficulty peeing.

Too much ketamine can affect your breathing, leading to unconsciousness or heart failure.

Ketamine can be addictive.

## → Ketamine and the law

Ketamine is an illegal, Class C drug.

Possession of Class C drugs carries a maximum sentence of 2 years imprisonment and/or fine.

Supplying (selling or giving away) carries a maximum sentence of 14 years imprisonment and a fine.

# LEGAL HIGHS

Legal highs are substances that have been created to copy the effects of illegal drugs. These normally come in two types - white powders that are supposed to have stimulant effects similar to speed or cocaine, and herbal substances that claim to have cannabis-like effects.

The stimulant-type substances normally come in various shades of white or off white colours, whilst the cannabis type, not surprisingly, look like skunk-type cannabis.

## → The effects of Legal Highs

The effects of these substance are similar to the illegal versions. See the pages on cannabis, cocaine and amphetamine.

## → The problem with Legal Highs

Just because someone says something is 'legal' doesn't mean it is legal or safe.

It also doesn't mean that what you bought this week contains the same substance, or amount, as the one you bought last week.

The substance you buy this week might take longer to work than the one you had last week, and taking more because you think it's not working can be dangerous.

Mixing legal highs with other drugs, particularly with alcohol, will increase your chance of having a bad time.

Drugs can interact in your body in unpredictable ways, causing you to overheat, become dehydrated or incapable of looking after yourself.

## → Legal Highs and the law

The law around legal highs can be confusing. Substances that claim to be legal highs actually may contain an illegal substance, new products are popping up on a regular basis.

Despite you thinking that what you have is legal, if you are stopped by the police and have something that looks like a drug, you will have it taken off you and you could be arrested until the police can confirm what it is.

# SOLVENTS

Solvents come in many forms, such as household products like glues, lighter fluid and aerosol sprays, and are normally inhaled.

## → The effects of solvents

Can cause intoxication (feeling very drunk), dizziness and drowsiness.

Can cause sickness and vomiting.

Can lead to aggressive and risky behaviour.

## → The problems with solvents

Can cause your heart to beat irregularly or stop, even on first-time use. This can happen whether they are sniffed from a bag, an aerosol or sprayed into your mouth.

Can cause loss of consciousness. If used in a dangerous location or your head is placed inside a bag there is the added danger of you having an accident or suffocating.

Can cause burning or a rash around your mouth and nose.

## → Solvents and the law

It is illegal to supply solvents to persons under the age of 18 if the supplier knows or suspects the product will be sniffed.

# MEPHEDRONE

Mephedrone (4-Methylmethcathinone) also known as Meph, Meow Meow, M-Cat, is a synthetic chemical, similar to amphetamines.

Usually an off-white powder. Normally found in tablets or capsules. It can have a sharp chemical or fishy/bleachy smell.

## → The effects of Legal Highs

Feelings of well-being, alertness, increased confidence and becoming more talkative.

Increased heart rate, palpitations, heavy sweating, blurred vision, hot flushes, irregular heartbeat, nausea, and muscle tension, especially in the face and jaw.

The main after-effects are tiredness, feeling dizzy and feeling low.

## → The problem with Legal Highs

Taking an entirely different substance. How do you know what that white powder is? This makes the risks unpredictable.

Damage to the nose through snorting.

Anxiety, panic attacks and agitation.

Raised blood pressure, which can lead to heart problems and strokes.

Memory loss (forgetting what you have done while high).

Heatstroke. Stimulants can cause you to overheat especially if you are bouncing around in a nightclub.

There isn't enough information around at the moment to predict if Mephedrone is addictive or will cause long-term damage to your health.

## → Mephedrone and the law

Mephedrone, and other cathinone-based substances, are illegal to possess, supply or produce. It is a class B drug, which means possession could get you up to 5 years in jail and a fine. Supplying (even giving it away) gets up to 14 years in jail and a fine.

## **STAYING SAFE**

The best way to stay safe and avoid the risks of using drugs and alcohol is not to use them at all, but if you intend to, then the information on the next couple of pages will help you and your friends have as safe a night out as possible.

### **PRE-LOADING**

A few drinks with your mate to loosen up as you get ready to go out can turn into a session. You are two and a half times more likely to get into a fight or have an accident than people who only start drinking when they go out.

### **MIXING DRUGS AND ALCOHOL**

Using drugs is risky in itself but mixing them with alcohol can make the effects of both very unpredictable and dangerous. Alcohol dehydrates you so mixing it with other drugs that do the same, like cocaine, ecstasy or mephedrone, or some of the legal highs, can be very risky.

### **PACE YOURSELF**

It can be tempting, on a night out, to get as hammered as possible, as quickly as possible. This is going to ruin your night! Try to pace yourself. Don't drink on an empty stomach. Have a soft drink or water. You don't have to have an alcoholic drink at every round. Drink lower alcoholic drinks, or drink slower. Sip your drink and then put it down somewhere you can keep an eye on it, holding your drink will mean you drink faster.

Don't take more drugs because you think the ones you have taken are not working. The effects of drugs can vary for lots of reasons, such as the way you feel, where you are, how much you have taken.

Or there may be different amounts of the drug in the substance you have taken. It may even be a completely different substance. Taking more could mean you overdose. Be patient, pace yourself!

## **VIOLENCE**

Alcohol and drugs reduce our ability to think straight. If you are someone who loses their temper easily, alcohol and drugs can make things worse. If you are on the receiving end of someone giving you grief just walk away. It can be hard to lose face in front of other people, but it has got to be better than being the victim of a serious assault or being locked up for giving someone else a hiding.

## **SEX**

Alcohol and drugs increase your self confidence and makes it easier to approach someone you fancy, but if you've been using drugs or alcohol you can end up going further than you intended.

If you intend to have sex, use a condom. Having sex without a condom can leave you open to sexually transmitted infections (STI's) and unplanned pregnancies. If you are worried you might have an STI, visit your GP, walk-in centre or visit the GUM clinic at your local hospital

Women can get oral emergency contraception from their GP, Walk-in-centre and most pharmacies. This can be taken 72 hours after unprotected sex and is available to anyone over 16 years of age.

## **DON'T FLASH YOUR VALUABLES**

Don't flash your expensive phone around, it could end up being stolen. Buy a cheap phone to use when you are going out. Make sure it has credit and is fully charged.

If you are drawing cash from a machine be aware of who is around and don't let anyone distract you, shield your pin and put your money away quickly. Use a machine in a well-lit public area.

### **KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR DRINK**

Never accept drinks from a stranger or someone you don't trust. These could be spiked.

### **LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF AND YOUR MATES**

If you are going to leave the club or pub with someone you have just met, make sure your friends know what you are doing and where you are going, maybe you could take a pic of your new friend and text it to your friends. If a friend is telling you where they are going and who with, listen to what they are saying.

### **FEELING UNWELL**

If someone goes too far and starts to feel unwell, take them somewhere quiet and cool. Keep them sitting up and awake, give them water if they're able to drink. If you are unable to wake them and their breathing is erratic, lie them on their side in the recovery position and get medical help.

### **GETTING HOME SAFELY**

Have a plan of how you are going to get home after a night out.

Try to pre-book and pay for a taxi to take you home from a pre-arranged location. Use this location as a meeting point if you get split up from your friends.

If you do end up walking home alone, be aware of your surroundings, stay on well-lit public roads, don't be tempted to take the short-cut across the dark, deserted park because you can't wait to crash into bed.

## USEFUL STUFF

# Some useful sources of information about drugs and alcohol

### Young Addaction

If you're a young person and you have questions about drugs and alcohol, you can speak to Addaction in complete confidence.

It won't cost you anything, either, their support is free of charge.

They will listen to what you have to say, and help you with any problems you may be having.

**W: [www.addaction.org.uk](http://www.addaction.org.uk)**

### TheSite.org

TheSite.org provide factsheets and articles on all the key issues facing young people, including alcohol and drugs.

**W: [www.thesite.org](http://www.thesite.org)**

### Talk to Frank

National drugs awareness site for young people and parents/carers. 24 hrs a day, seven days a week.

**W: [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)**

**T: 0800 77 66 00 (calls are free and confidential)**