

FACTS ABOUT DRUGS



www.drugaware.com.au





> **WHAT IS A DRUG?**

A drug is any substance (with the exception of food and water) which, when taken into the body, alters the body's function either physically and/or psychologically. Drugs may be legal (e.g. alcohol, caffeine and tobacco) or illegal (e.g. cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine and heroin).

>WHAT IS A PSYCHOACTIVE DRUG?

Psychoactive drugs affect the central nervous system and alter a person's mood, thinking and behaviour. Psychoactive drugs may be divided into four categories:

Depressants: Drugs that decrease alertness by slowing down the activity of the central nervous system (e.g. heroin, alcohol and analgesics).

Stimulants: Drugs that increase the body's state of arousal by increasing the activity of the brain (e.g. caffeine, nicotine and amphetamines).

Hallucinogens: Drugs that alter perception and can cause hallucinations, such as seeing or hearing something that is not there (e.g. LSD and 'magic mushrooms').

Other: Some drugs fall into the 'other' category, as they may have properties of more than one of the above categories (e.g. cannabis has depressive, hallucinogenic and some stimulant properties).

>WHY DO PEOPLE USE DRUGS?

People use drugs for a variety of reasons. Young people often use drugs for the same reasons that adults do. Some of these include:

- to have fun
- to gain confidence
- out of curiosity
- to lessen inhibitions
- to celebrate or commiserate
- self-medication to cope with problems
- to relax and forget problems
- to socialise
- as a form of escapism
- to remove personal responsibility for decisions
- to relieve boredom and stress.

Friends, parents, older brothers and sisters and the media can also have some influence over a young person's decision to use drugs.

>POLY DRUG USE

Poly drug use occurs when two or more drugs are used at, or near, the same time. Mixing drugs can also occur when a manufacturer combines different drugs to achieve a specific effect or to save money by mixing in cheaper chemicals. This can result in a person combining drugs unintentionally.

The risk of harm is increased if more than one drug is used at a time, especially when drugs of unknown content and purity are combined. This includes mixing over-the-counter drugs, prescription drugs and illegal drugs.

Poly drug use increases the risk of the following symptoms and effects:

- heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature may be exaggerated, which can increase the chance of serious problems occurring;
- overdose; and
- severe emotional and mental disturbances such as panic attacks and paranoia.

>EFFECTS OF DRUGS


The experience that a person has when using alcohol or other drugs will be affected by the:


Individual: Mood, physical size, gender, personality, expectations of the drug, whether the person has food in his/her stomach and whether other drugs have been taken.


Drug: The amount used, how it is used and the strength and purity of the drug.


Environment: Whether the person is using it with friends, on his/her own, in a social setting or at home, at work, before or while driving.

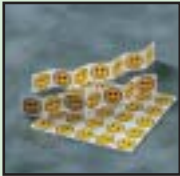
> DRUG INFORMATION


DRUG	DESCRIPTION	SHORT-TERM EFFECTS	LONG-TERM EFFECTS	OVERDOSE
Amphetamines Speed, Whizz, Ice, Uppers Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphetamine Sulphate • Dexamphetamine • Methamphetamine - crystal, meth, or rock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulant drugs that speed up certain chemicals in the brain • Dexamphetamine is used to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It is swallowed in tablet form or injected • Amphetamines can be swallowed, injected, smoked or inhaled ('snorted'). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperactivity • Increased blood pressure, breathing and pulse-rates • Anxiety, irritability, suspiciousness, panic attacks and a threatening manner • Increased energy, alertness, confidence and talkativeness • Reduced appetite, inability to sleep and enlarged pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malnutrition • Reduced resistance to infection • Violent behaviour • Emotional disturbances • Periods of psychosis • Tolerance. 	Overdose can cause: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strokes • heart failure • seizures • death.

DRUG	DESCRIPTION	SHORT-TERM EFFECTS	LONG-TERM EFFECTS	OVERDOSE
Cannabis Mull, Pot, Weed, Leaf, Gunga, Marijuana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily a depressant, can have hallucinogenic and some stimulant properties • Cannabis - dried greenish-brown leaves or flowers • Hashish - brown to black resin • Hashish oil - reddish brown oil • Can be smoked, or cooked and eaten. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of concentration • Impaired balance • Slower reflexes • Increased appetite • Increased heart-rate • Feeling of well-being • Loss of inhibitions • Confusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bronchitis • Lung cancer • Dependence • Interference with sexual drive and hormone production • Change in motivation • Decreased concentration • Decreased memory and learning abilities • Schizophrenia and manic depression (bipolar disorder) in those who have a vulnerability to the condition. 	There have been no confirmed deaths directly from cannabis overdose. Over a long period of time regular use of cannabis can lead to a number of serious negative health consequences. Combining other drugs, such as alcohol, with cannabis can be very dangerous, particularly if driving or operating machinery.


DRUG	DESCRIPTION	SHORT-TERM EFFECTS	LONG-TERM EFFECTS	OVERDOSE
Cocaine Coke, Freebase, Crack, Charlie, C, Rock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cocaine is a stimulant drug which affects the central nervous system by speeding up the activity of certain chemicals in the brain, producing a feeling of increased alertness and reduced fatigue • Is usually snorted or swallowed, but can be injected or smoked in the form of crack or freebase. Smoking crack or freebase is uncommon in Australia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased breathing and pulse-rates • Increased blood pressure • High body temperature • Increased alertness • Reduced appetite • Feeling of wellbeing • Enlarged pupils • Anxiety, irritability and suspiciousness • Exaggerated feelings of confidence and energy • Inability to sleep. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance and dependence • Aggressive or violent behaviour • Loss of appetite, weight loss and malnutrition • Irritability or emotional disturbances • Restlessness • Paranoia • Periods of psychosis • Auditory hallucinations • Convulsions • Reduced resistance to infection. 	Overdose can cause: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased heart-rate • seizures • hyperventilation • heart failure • respiratory failure • burst blood vessels in the brain • death.

DRUG	DESCRIPTION	SHORT-TERM EFFECTS	LONG-TERM EFFECTS	OVERDOSE
Ecstasy Es, XTC, Eccies, Pills, Bickies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecstasy is a derivative of amphetamine and has both stimulant and hallucinogenic properties • Tablets or capsules are usually swallowed. Effects begin within 30 minutes and last up to six hours • Not designed to be injected. If injected can cause blocked veins, abscesses, blood poisoning and gangrene. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overheating and dehydration, which can cause muscle meltdown • Excessive water consumption can result in a breakdown of cell structure, which can cause cells to swell, burst and die • Feeling of wellbeing and exaggerated confidence • Anxiety • Jaw clenching and teeth grinding • Poor concentration • Insomnia • Increased pulse rate and blood pressure • Hot and cold flushes, sweating • Nausea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Drowsiness • Muscle aches • Loss of appetite • Insomnia • Loss of concentration • Irritability. 	<p>Overdose usually results from the body overheating and becoming dehydrated, which can cause muscle meltdown and possible death from failure of major organs such as liver or kidneys.</p> <p>Overdose may also occur from excessive water consumption and retention, leading the body's cells to swell which can result in brain damage and death.</p> <p>The risk of overdose increases with a larger dose.</p>

DRUG	DESCRIPTION cont	SHORT-TERM EFFECTS	LONG-TERM EFFECTS	OVERDOSE
Hallucinogens LSD, Acid, Trips, Mushies, Tabs 	<p>(mescaline) and some mushrooms (psilocybin)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSD is usually swallowed. Effects start within 30 to 60 minutes, peak in three to five hours and last from nine to 24 hours • Mescaline can be chewed or boiled into a liquid and drunk. Effects last from four to six hours • Mushrooms can be eaten raw, cooked or made into a drink. Effects last from four to six hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dilation of pupils • Increase in heart-rate and blood pressure • Increase in body temperature and sweating • Seeing things in a distorted way or seeing things that do not exist • Dizziness • Drowsiness • Nausea • Intense sensory experiences - bright colours, sharper sounds • Impaired coordination and tremors • Distorted sense of time - minutes can seem like hours • Varying emotions • Distorted sense of space and body • Tension and anxiety leading to panic attacks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashbacks - a spontaneous and unpredictable recurrence of prior drug experience ('tripping') without taking the drug. Flashbacks may occur days, weeks or years after the drug was last taken. They can be triggered by the use of other drugs, stress, fatigue, and physical exercise or for no apparent reason • Increased risk of developing severe mental disturbances in those who have a predisposition to the condition • Impaired memory and concentration • Tolerance • Psychological dependence. 	<p>While there are no reported cases of fatal overdoses directly from hallucinogens there are still significant risks associated with the use of these drugs. When consuming hallucinogens, such as LSD, a person's perception is affected, which can lead to people placing themselves in risky situations.</p> <p>With magic mushrooms it is often difficult to distinguish between them and poisonous look-alikes. Some poisonous mushrooms can cause permanent liver damage or death within hours of being consumed. It is very dangerous to pick and eat wild mushrooms.</p>
DESCRIPTION				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hallucinogens describe a class of drugs that produce hallucinations. A hallucination is an illusion of seeing or hearing something that is not actually there • Can be produced synthetically or naturally. The most commonly known hallucinogen is synthetic lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). Natural hallucinogenic chemicals are found in plants such as the peyote cactus 				

DRUG	DESCRIPTION	SHORT-TERM EFFECTS	LONG-TERM EFFECTS	OVERDOSE
Heroin Hammer, H, Smack, Horse, White, Beige 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heroin is a depressant. It affects the body's central nervous system by slowing down the activity of certain chemicals in the brain. This slows down the whole body, including breathing and heart rate. 	<p>Low doses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shallow breathing Nausea and vomiting Constipation Sleeplessness Loss of balance and coordination Loss of concentration Feeling of well-being Relief from pain. <p>High doses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow breathing Pupils narrow to pin points Skin cold to touch Coma and death. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependence Loss of appetite Chronic constipation Heart, chest and bronchial problems Women often experience irregular periods and are susceptible to infertility Men can experience impotence. 	<p>Overdose from heroin occurs as a result of the depressant properties of the drug. Heroin can slow a person's heart and breathing rates. This can lead to heart and respiratory failure and in turn to coma and death.</p> <p>The risk of heroin overdose generally increases with a larger dose. As the strength and content of street heroin is unknown it can be difficult to judge the dose, increasing the risk of overdose.</p>

DRUG	DESCRIPTION	SHORT-TERM EFFECTS	SHORT-TERM cont	LONG-TERM EFFECTS
Caffeine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caffeine is a stimulant drug. Stimulants increase the body's state of arousal by speeding up the production of nerve impulses, which increases the activity of the brain In its purest form, caffeine consists of bitter-tasting crystals. It is found in many common substances like coffee, tea, cocoa, chocolate, cola-flavoured soft drinks, energy drinks and some medical preparations. 	<p>Low doses of caffeine One or two cups of average-strength coffee can produce mild effects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased alertness and energy Alterations to mood Increased metabolism Elevated blood pressure Increased body temperature Increased urination Increased gastric acid secretion Delayed onset of sleep and shortened sleep time Decreased depth of sleep and decreased amount of dream sleep. 	<p>Large doses of caffeine More than eight average cups of coffee can produce effects such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headaches Hand tremors Impaired coordination Nervousness Diarrhoea Delirium High urinary acid levels Restlessness Increased urination Flushed face Insomnia Stomach upsets Muscle twitching 	<p>Some research has shown links between heavy use (greater than three cups of coffee per day) of caffeine and osteoporosis, high blood pressure and heart disease, heartburn, ulcers, severe insomnia and infertility.</p> <p>Pregnant women who consume high amounts of caffeine have increased risk of miscarriage, difficult birth and delivery of low-weight babies.</p>

DRUG	DESCRIPTION	HEALTH EFFECTS - MALES	HEALTH EFFECTS - FEMALES	HEALTH EFFECTS - MALES AND FEMALES
Steroids Anabolic steroids, Roids, Gear, Juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steroids can be prescribed by a doctor to treat some illnesses • Athletes, body builders and some young people may use anabolic steroids (illegally) to improve their body size or athletic performance • Anabolic androgenic steroids have two types of effects. Anabolic effects include increased muscle growth. The androgenic component increases the body's male characteristics • In this table the word 'steroid' refers to anabolic and androgenic steroids. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shrinking testicles • Impotence • Testicular cysts • Pain when urinating • Development of breasts • Decreased testosterone production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of facial hair • Changes in the menstrual cycle (it may stop) • Enlargement of the clitoris • Deepened voice • Decreased breast size • Hair growth on the back and bottom • Infertility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acne • Bloating • High blood pressure • Liver damage and cancer • Increased risk of injury • Increased cholesterol level • Decreased immune function • Increased muscle size and strength • Damage to kidneys and heart • Insomnia • Urinary tract infection • Mood changes such as increased aggression and depression.

> THE LAW

Illegal drugs other than cannabis

In Western Australia, under the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1981*, it is illegal to use, possess, manufacture or supply drugs such as amphetamines, cocaine, ecstasy, hallucinogens and heroin. Offences under this Act carry heavy fines and/or prison sentences. Penalties range from a \$2000 fine and/or two years in prison to a \$100 000 fine and/or imprisonment for 25 years. A person convicted of a drug offence will receive a criminal record, which can lead to difficulties in getting a job, health insurance, credit or visas for overseas travel.

Cannabis

It is **against the law** to cultivate, possess, use, sell or supply cannabis. It is also against the law to possess pipes and other implements on which there are detectable traces of cannabis.

While the possession of small amounts of cannabis is still an offence it can now be dealt with by issuing a Cannabis Infringement Notice (CIN). If a person receives a CIN and pays the financial penalty or attends a Cannabis Education Session (CES), the person will not be required to appear in court and will not incur a criminal record.

The Cannabis Infringement Notice (CIN) Scheme

The Cannabis Infringement Notice (CIN) Scheme enables police, at their discretion, to issue an infringement notice for possession of small amounts of cannabis. People who receive a CIN will be required to pay a financial penalty within 28 days, complete a Cannabis Education Session within 28 days or choose to have the matter heard in court.

There is a limit to the number of times within a three-year period that a person who is issued with a CIN may choose to pay a financial penalty rather than complete a CES or go to court. A person who is issued with one or more CINs on each of three separate days within a three-year period will be required on the third and any subsequent occasion to attend a Cannabis Education Session or go to court, and will not be eligible to pay a financial penalty.

If police have relevant evidence, a person found in possession of a small amount of cannabis could still be charged with the more serious offence of possession of cannabis with intent to sell or supply.

People under 15 years-of-age cannot be issued with a CIN under the CIN Scheme. Under the *Young Offenders Act 1994*, young people (aged 10 to 17 years inclusively) who are found growing, in possession of, or using cannabis within the limits set by the CIN Scheme may be cautioned or referred to a Juvenile Justice Team.

The CIN Scheme does not apply to possession by an adult of any quantities of cannabis resin (hash), hash oil, or other cannabis derivatives.

If you would like more information about cannabis or how to access support services in Western Australia, go to the 'More Information' section at the end of this booklet.

Steroids

In Western Australia it is illegal to possess, use, manufacture, supply, import or trade steroids without a prescription or licence. Penalties range from a \$2000 fine and/or a two-year prison term to a \$100 000 fine and/or imprisonment for 25 years.

Frequent testing of athletes both in and out of competition increases the chance of athletes getting caught and being banned from competition, sometimes for life.

Caffeine

Under the Australian Food Standards' Code, the following regulations apply to caffeine and energy drinks in Australia:

- the caffeine content of cola drinks, flavoured cordials and flavoured syrups must not exceed 15mg/100mL serve and energy drinks must not contain more than 32mg per 100mL
- energy drinks and caffeinated beverages must carry clear warnings on the label stating that the product:
 - contains caffeine;
 - is not recommended for children, pregnant women or lactating women; and
 - is not recommended for caffeine sensitive individuals.

(Note: This regulation does not apply to foods containing caffeine.)
- prior to 1998, the sale of energy drinks in Australia was prohibited.

> DRUGS AND DRIVING

Effects of drugs on driving ability include the following:

STIMULANTS	DEPRESSANTS	HALLUCINOGENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• give the driver false confidence• increase risk-taking behaviour• do not necessarily increase driving ability or the driver's coordination• can increase the risk of having a crash.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• slow the driver's reaction time• distort the driver's perceptions• decrease ability to coordinate the appropriate reaction when driving• can increase the risk of having a crash.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• distort the driver's visual perceptions• cause the driver difficulty in judging distances• decreases ability to coordinate the appropriate reaction when driving• can increase the risk of having a crash.

In Western Australia, it is against the law for anyone to drive under the influence of a psychoactive drug or with a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of 0.05% or above. 'P' platers are not legally able to drive with a BAC of 0.02% or more. The *Road Traffic Act 1974 Section 63* states that 'a person who drives or attempts to drive a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or alcohol and drugs to such an extent as to be incapable of having proper control of the vehicle commits an offence, and the offender may be arrested without warrant'. Breaking this law carries penalties including disqualification from driving, fines and/or imprisonment. A person convicted of an offence under the *Road Traffic Act 1974* is liable for the following:

First Offence

- a fine ranging from \$400 to \$2,500; and
- disqualification from holding or obtaining a drivers' licence for up to six months.

Second Offence

- a fine ranging from \$800 to \$3,500 or imprisonment for six months; and
- disqualification from holding or obtaining a drivers' licence for up to two years.

Third or Subsequent Offence

- a fine ranging from \$800 to \$5,000 or imprisonment for up to 18 months; and
- permanent disqualification from holding or obtaining a drivers' licence.

(Note: These penalties are periodically reviewed and may differ from those presented here.)

> TOLERANCE, DEPENDENCE AND WITHDRAWAL

With regular use, tolerance to and dependence on drugs can develop. Withdrawal symptoms may also be experienced if the drug is reduced or stopped.

Tolerance: A person needs more of a drug in order to achieve the same effects they felt previously with smaller amounts.

Dependence: Use of the drug becomes central to a person's life, and they may experience withdrawal symptoms if they stop using the drug.

Withdrawal: Describes a series of symptoms that may appear when a drug on which a user is physically dependent is stopped or significantly reduced. The withdrawal symptoms vary depending on a range of factors including the drug type and tend to be opposite to the effects produced by the drug. The body is always trying to maintain a state of balance. When the body has become accustomed to the drug for normal function and use is ceased, the body will try to counterbalance for the change producing withdrawal symptoms.

> RELATIONSHIPS

Drug use can lead to social and emotional problems and affect relationships with family and friends. Drugs affect people in different ways. Some people may become depressed, angry, aggressive, sleepy, unmotivated, paranoid, anxious or talkative. These reactions will affect how they relate to other people, such as friends, parents and siblings and may have negative effects on these relationships.

> DRUG USE AND PREGNANCY

Drugs can affect an unborn child. It is safer not to use any drugs during pregnancy unless under medical supervision. Psychoactive drugs cross the placenta (the barrier between the mother's and the baby's blood) so a baby is exposed to the same chemicals as the mother. These chemicals can affect the growth and development of the baby and cause miscarriage, premature birth and birth defects.

It is recommended that women check with their doctor (or other health professional) if they are using or planning to use drugs including prescribed and over-the-counter medicines, while pregnant or breastfeeding.

> COST

The street price of drugs change depending on availability and market trends. The cost of purchasing drugs can lead to financial problems for both occasional and regular users.

> TAKING CARE

Medications should be used as prescribed by a doctor and only by the person for whom they are prescribed.

It is safer not to use illegal drugs. For those who choose to use illegal drugs, the following should be remembered:

- As using illegal drugs can have harmful and unpredictable effects, a person may find themselves in a dangerous situation. If noticeably affected, they should not be left alone.
- If you suspect bad effects, call an ambulance immediately. Don't delay, you could save a life. The ambulance officers are there to help you. Be sure to describe what drug the person has taken. If the person is unconscious and you know first aid, place them in the recovery position and ensure the airway is clear. If they have stopped breathing, provide Expired Air Resuscitation (EAR). **The police are not required to attend unless a death has occurred or the ambulance officers are threatened.**
- It is safer not to inject drugs. If someone does inject, they should always use clean equipment (syringe, swab, tourniquet, spoon, glass, filter and sterile water) and should not share equipment. Fitpacks[®], which contain clean syringes are available from:
 - most pharmacies;
 - some regional hospitals, health centres and nursing posts; and
 - needle and syringe exchange programs. (For information on opening times and locations of these programs phone the Alcohol and Drug Information Service, contact details are outlined at the back of this booklet.)
- Used injecting equipment should be disposed of responsibly e.g. disposing used equipment into a sharp safe container.
- Don't drive or operate machinery. These activities can be dangerous while under the influence of drugs.
- If drugs like ecstasy are being used, keep cool while dancing or doing other physical activities. Take regular breaks and wear light, absorbent clothing. Beware of hats as they trap body heat. Drink water, but regulate intake so that not too much is consumed.

> TREATMENT PATHWAYS

There are a variety of treatment pathways available for people with drug-related problems. The drug(s) used and the availability of services as well as the user's health, desired outcome, support network and unique circumstances need to be taken into consideration. Deciding on the best treatment pathway or combination of pathways is best done in consultation with a drug and alcohol counsellor.

> MORE INFORMATION

For further information on alcohol, tobacco or other drugs not mentioned in this publication call the Alcohol and Drug Information Service or Parent Drug Information Service, or visit www.drugaware.com.au

Alcohol and Drug Information Service

- Access information about drugs confidentially and quickly
- Talk to a professionally trained counsellor about alcohol or other drugs
- Find out about other services.
(08) 9442 5000
1800 198 024 toll-free country callers

www.drugaware.com.au

- Access detailed information about drugs
- Find out about the latest hot issues and events
- Post questions and have them answered anonymously by health professionals
- Find links to other useful sites.

Parent Drug Information Service

- Drug information and support for PARENTS and family members
- Talk to a professionally trained counsellor about alcohol and other drugs
- Talk confidentially to another parent for strategies and support
- Find out where to go for further help.
(08) 9442 5050
1800 653 203 toll-free country callers

www.enoughisenough.com.au

- Information about what you can do to respond to alcohol-related problems affecting you or your community
- Publications that provide facts about alcohol and tips to prevent problems
- Links to related websites and useful contacts
- A chance to have your say or ask questions.

> PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES

A variety of publications and other resources produced by the Drug and Alcohol Office are available by telephoning HealthInfo on 1300 135 030 or by visiting www.dao.health.wa.gov.au

> REFERENCES

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Changes in circumstances after the date of publication of this brochure inevitably will result in this brochure becoming outdated in some respects. It is the responsibility of readers of this brochure to keep themselves updated with any changes or developments.



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For information about drugs, visit www.drugaware.com.au or for confidential advice and counselling call the Alcohol and Drug Information Service 24-hour helpline on 9442 5000 or 1800 198 024 (country callers).