

Drugs.

What do drugs do?

Psychological Dependence

Whilst the body can function without the drug, individuals can be driven by the impulsive urge for the sensations created by drug misuse.

Tolerance

Develops over time as the body adapts to the pattern of drug misuse. The user requires greater amounts of the drug to achieve the effect, it is being used in larger quantities just to feel normal.

Physical Dependence

Prolonged drug misuse causes changes to a variety of chemical functions until the body cannot physically perform without the drug.

Withdrawal

Any attempt to break the cycle of physical dependence can be a painful and dangerous process and can result in severe bouts of nausea and possibly coma.



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Cannabis

- Sedative, class B
- Max penalty for possession 5 years + fine, intent to supply 14 years + fine
- Is more carcinogenic than tobacco
- The most commonly misused drug in the UK
- The active ingredient can stay in your system for up to 6 weeks after ingestion.

Dangers

Psychosis, respiratory damage, loss of coordination, apathy, short and long term memory loss, cancer.

Effects

Users might experience some of the following: paranoia, hunger, nausea, depression.

Ecstasy

- Stimulant, class A
- Max penalty for possession 7 years + fine, intent to supply - life + fine
- The 'Ecstasy' group of chemicals are designed to trigger a massive release of a naturally produced body chemical called serotonin, which controls mood.

Dangers

Long term mental illness, uncontrollable moods, long term depression, dehydration and heat exhaustion, renal failure (liver and kidneys), water intoxication, paranoia, coma and convulsions.

Effects

Users might experience some of the following: visual disorders, headaches, nausea/vomiting, anxiety, paranoia and panic attacks.

Amphetamines

- Class B (class A when prepared for injection)
- Max penalty for possession 5 years + fine, intent to supply 14 years + fine.
Amphetamine misuse causes muscle contraction particularly in the face.

Dangers

Increased risk of heart attack, brain haemorrhage / catatonia and paralysis, physical and psychological dependence, convulsion, coma, damage to the immune system, uncontrollable aggression, severe agitation, paranoia, sleeplessness, exhaustion.

Effects

Users experience some of the following: increased energy and alertness, heightened emotions.

Cocaine

- Stimulant, class A
- Max penalty for possession 7 years + fine, intent to supply - life + fine
- There are on average 2 deaths each week in the UK resulting from cocaine misuse

Dangers

Increased risk of heart attack, brain haemorrhage, physical dependence, convulsion, permanent cell membrane damage (nasal septum and heart wall), hallucinations, uncontrollable aggression, severe agitation and paranoia, sleeplessness.

Effects

Users might experience some of the following: increase energy and alertness, heightened emotions.

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Heroin and opiates

- Sedative, class A
- Max penalty for possession 7 years + fine, intent to supply - life + fine.

Dangers

Indifference at work, hallucinations, injection associated issues, HIV & Hepatitis, collapsed veins and poor circulation, abscesses, limb amputation, overdose, dependency.

Effects

Users might experience some of the following: euphoric rush followed by drowsiness, suppressed emotional activity, low sex drive.

LSD

- Hallucinogen, class A
- Max penalty for possession 7 years + fine, intent to supply - life + fine
- LSD is a drug that alters the brain's recognition of time, speed, distance and context. The unpredictability of the drug's effect is a major concern as users have no control over either the 'trip' or the 'flashback'

Dangers

Hallucinations, flashback, unpredictable effects and consequences, nervous breakdown, depression, anxiety.

Effects

Users may experience: changed perception.

Steroids

- Performance enhancing drugs, class A to C - depending on drug.
- Max penalty for possession 7 years + fine, intent to supply - life + fine.

Dangers

Uncontrollable aggression, shrinkage of testicles and impotence in men, development of breasts in men, masculinisation in women, jaundice, heart irregularities.

Effects

Users might experience some of the following: increased muscle bulk, puffiness in the face, sense of well being, mood swings and irritability.

Stimulants

Increased risk of heart attack, brain haemorrhage and nerve damage, convulsion, respiratory failure, uncontrolled aggression.

Analgesics

Impaired vision and hallucination, heart, kidney and liver failure, dependence, masked pain may allow further damage.



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Misuse of medicines, pharmaceuticals and chemicals

- Prescription and non prescription, class C (controlled drugs only)
- Max penalty for possession 2 years + fine, intent to supply 5 years + fine. A wide variety of pharmaceutical and over the counter products are misused - generally the products fall into one of the following groups: Sedatives, stimulants, analgesics (painkillers), solvents

Dangers

Physical dependence, loss of coordination, short and long term memory loss.

Getting help:

The Home Office National Drugs and Alcohol in the Workplace Initiative

www.drugs.gov.uk

Drug Abuse at Work: a guide for employers, IND(G)91L, available from HSE Books

01787 881165 or www.hse.gov.uk

Drug Scope

www.drugscope.org.uk

Health / Addictions - support and help

<http://www.support4learning.org.uk/health/users.htm>