



# DRUGS: THE FACTS

Here's everything you need to know about what drugs are, what they do and how you can make the best decision when it comes to protecting yourself and your friends.

## YOU CAN SAY NO

Well, like all decisions in life, the best way to make the right one is to find out all the facts and make an informed choice that's right for you. By knowing the risks and the potential consequences, you have a better chance of protecting yourself and staying true to your beliefs instead of just following the crowd.

The biggest problem with illicit drugs is that you never really know exactly what's in them and what they're going to do. There is no 'quality control' that guarantees what they're made of, so even if you think you know what you're putting in your body, sometimes you'll end up taking a bigger risk than you bargained on. Still, some people choose to ignore the risks and you need to be prepared to make your own decision. Saying no to illegal drugs in front of a group of your friends can be a tough call. It can be a big test for close friendships and might even change who you hang out with. But once you have all the information, having the confidence to make your own decision in any situation will probably be a whole lot easier.

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## EMERGENCY

If you suspect somebody has overdosed, you need to get help immediately.

Signs of overdose include: vomiting or convulsing; passing out; excessive sweating; abnormal breathing; or a slow or rapid pulse. Call 000 and make sure an ambulance is on its way—don't be worried that you might get in trouble, because ambulance officers and emergency doctors are only interested in the health of the person they are treating, not getting anybody busted! Give the ambos all the information you have, including what drugs the person has taken and how much, plus any alcohol they might have consumed.

## WEB HIT

[www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au)  
[www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)  
[www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au)  
[www.drugs.health.gov.au](http://www.drugs.health.gov.au)  
[www.youth.nsw.gov.au/ youth\\_links/links/school\\_and\\_beyond](http://www.youth.nsw.gov.au/youth_links/links/school_and_beyond)



## UNDER THE INFLUENCE

No matter how in control you think you are, some people unfortunately still make bad decisions and end up taking drugs. What can you do if you suspect a friend has a drug problem? Here are some of the signs to look for and the best ways to get them the help they need.

The most common warning signs of dependence include a sudden drop in grades, withdrawal from social activities and sports, chronic tiredness, unexplained mood swings, changes in eating patterns, sudden changes in friendship groups, withdrawal from family, aggression or other erratic behaviour and an unexplained lack of money.

Remember that people can change for a number of reasons and that the teenage years are naturally a time for change anyway—so it's not a good idea to confront someone and accuse them of using drugs. But if you do suspect somebody you care about is having difficulties, acting early could save them from serious problems.

The trick is to arm yourself with all the right phone numbers and contacts that will enable them to get help once they recognise they need it.

You shouldn't be surprised if they deny they have a problem or try to shut you out—just aim to be supportive without being judgemental and let them know you care.

If you continue to have difficulty getting through to your friend, consult a professional for advice, or talk to a trusted adult, teacher or counsellor for help.

For more information on overcoming addiction for yourself or a friend, call the Alcohol and Drug Information Service on 1800 422 599, Lifeline on 131 114 or the Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800.

## REALITY BITES

Here are some stories from people who have their very own tales to tell about drugs and the pressure they came across to take them.

### JAMES

"I decided early on that I wasn't going to take drugs because my cousin smoked a lot of pot and it changed his personality. He went from being a really fun guy who was doing well at uni to being a depressed, unmotivated person who dropped out of his course and pretty much just stayed in his room all day. In the end he kicked the habit, but I saw how hard it was for him to do that and how it tore his family apart. Even though he's off the weed now, he still doesn't have much confidence and is more withdrawn than he used to be. I'd never touch drugs after seeing what he went through—it made it pretty easy for me to say no."

### EDWINA

"I made friends with a girl in my first job who was older than me and used to take drugs on the weekend. Once she gave me a pill and I took half of it, but it just made me feel really jumpy and I was scared of what it was doing to me. My friend was talking non-stop and laughing a lot, but it actually wasn't that fun and I suddenly found her really annoying! In the end, I went home and went to bed, but I couldn't sleep and the next day I felt scatty and depressed. I wouldn't take drugs again. It wasn't fun and I just don't see the point!"

## WHAT'S WHAT?

With so many different drugs out there, it's difficult to decipher what's what—and what can happen to you if you take something. Even though you may choose to never use drugs yourself, you live in a society where they exist, so you still need to be aware of the different substances and their common street names. It's important to have knowledge about different drugs, so you can make informed choices.

Hallucinogens	This group of drugs acts on the mind, distorting the way users see and hear things.	
Drug	LSD	Mushrooms
Street name	Acid, trip, microdot, tab, blotters, wedges.	Magic mushies, mushies, gold tops, blue meanies, shrooms.
What is it?	Usually prepared as a liquid and sold on small pieces of blotting paper. The tiny pieces of paper (trips) are usually decorated with small designs and are most commonly swallowed whole, but may also be sniffed or injected.	Usually picked, dried or boiled and then eaten alone or mixed with other food.
Negative effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased body temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, agitation and loss of appetite.</li> <li>• Violent mood swings; overwhelming emotions such as fear, delusions and extreme hallucinations.</li> <li>• Deluded judgment often leads to fatal accidents, like falls.</li> <li>• Long term-effects may cause flashbacks, decreased memory, and prolonged depression and anxiety.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor coordination and concentration.</li> <li>• Increased body temperature and excessive sweating, which can alternate with sudden cold chills.</li> <li>• Long-term effects may include flashbacks and confusion.</li> </ul>

<b>Stimulants</b>	<b>Drugs in this category act on the central nervous system and increase brain activity. They might make you feel more aware and alert, as well as increasing your heart rate and body temperature.</b>		
<b>Drug</b>	<b>Ecstasy</b>	<b>Methamphetamine</b>	<b>Cocaine</b>
<b>Street name</b>	E, eccy, pills, MDMA	Meth, speed, go-ee, whiz, base, ice, crystal meth, crystal, shabu, uppers, oxblood	Coke, charlie, snow, blow
<b>What is it?</b>	Mostly found in tablet form, ecstasy can also come in a capsule or be taken as a powder. Tablets vary in size and colour and often carry a branded design, such as a lightning bolt or a crown.	Can come in many forms, including powder or crystals, which are often translucent. Can also come in many colours.	A white, flaky, soluble powder that has an hallucinogenic effect.
<b>Negative effects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical nervousness and an inability to concentrate.</li> <li>There is debate about the long-term psychological effects of ecstasy. Some users have experienced memory problems, sleep problems and ongoing depression.</li> <li>Other physical effects may include kidney failure, cardiac arrest and convulsions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amphetamine causes the body's nervous system to speed up, which commonly leads to paranoia, anxiety and aggression.</li> <li>Poor memory and lack of concentration.</li> <li>The 'come down' effects following a 'high' can last for days, leaving users feeling tired, angry and depressed.</li> <li>Use has been linked to amphetamine or 'speed' psychosis, where the user becomes paranoid for long periods and can also experience hallucinations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cocaine can cause anxiety, paranoia and depression.</li> <li>Highly addictive, and if taken in large quantities can result in overdose.</li> <li>Potential consequences of continued use include ulceration of the nose, cardiac arrest, convulsions and death.</li> </ul>

<b>Depressants</b>	<b>These drugs act on the central nervous system and slow down brain activity and breathing. Mixing depressants or using too much of one substance can cause someone to overdose and stop breathing.</b>		
<b>Drug</b>	<b>Cannabis</b>	<b>Benzodiazepines</b>	<b>Heroin</b>
<b>Street name</b>	Pot, weed, smoke, joint, mull, reefer, dope, ganja, or yarndi.	Downers, benzos. Also known by its trademark names, such as Mogadon, Valium, serepam and Temazepam.	H, gear, hammer, smack, horse.
<b>What is it?</b>	Has two main forms: marijuana and hashish. Marijuana is more common and is made from the dried flowers and leaves of the cannabis plant. It is usually smoked but can also be mixed with food. Hashish is made from the resin on the cannabis plant. It is dried, pressed into small blocks and then smoked.	Usually prescribed in tablet or capsule form and taken orally.	Usually comes in powder form or small rocks, to be snorted, injected or smoked.
<b>Negative effects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studies link cannabis use with increased risk of mental illness and other problems such as suicide, other substance use, criminal behaviour and poor educational or academic achievement.</li> <li>Some users have also been found to have ongoing memory, concentration and lung problems.</li> <li>Paranoia, mood swings, sleepiness.</li> <li>Loss of short-term memory, coordination and concentration.</li> <li>Can bring on pre-existing mental health conditions such as schizophrenia in those people with a family history of the illness.</li> <li>Increasing evidence suggests that heavy, regular use can lead to mental health problems such as psychosis, anxiety and depression.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These drugs are highly addictive and carry severe withdrawal problems.</li> <li>Can cause drowsiness, confusion, shallow breathing and slurred speech.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of appetite, loss of sexual desire, and chronic constipation.</li> <li>As injection is one of the most common methods of use, the risk of diseases such as Hepatitis C and HIV is high.</li> <li>Even a small amount of heroin can lead to death from overdose.</li> </ul>