

The Effects of Drugs

	Substance	Immediate Effects	Use with Pregnancy	Continued Heavy/Regular Use	Ways of Taking
STIMULANT	Tobacco	Lasts 0-2 hours. Increased heart and pulse rate.	Harmful	Heart and lung disease, cancer, high blood pressure, bronchitis and breathing difficulties.	Smoking
	Caffeine	Lasts 2-4 hours. Increased alertness. Large doses can delay sleep.	Doctors advise less than 4 cups of tea/coffee per day	Restlessness, upset stomach. Can be harmful for people with heart problems.	Oral
	Amphetamine Speed	Lasts 4-8 hours. Highly stimulating. Excitement, increased activity and decreased appetite. Large doses delay sleep.	Harmful	Inability to sleep, restlessness, headaches, aggression. Can cause severe mental or emotional disturbances.	Snorting, injecting, anally, orally.
	Cocaine	Can last up to 4 hours. Feeling of self confidence and power, increased energy and decreased appetite.	Harmful	Loss of concentration and motivation. Dizziness, aggression and mental disturbances. Can cause psychiatric complications. Snorting can lead to tearing of the nasal wall.	Snorting, injecting, anally, orally.
	MDMA Ecstasy	Can last up to 6 hours. Increased blood pressure, confidence and a feeling of closeness with others. Sensation of floating, anxiety, nausea and paranoia can occur.	Harmful	Sensation of floating and other disturbed perceptions. Can cause convulsions, irrational behaviour, insomnia, depression.	Oral, injecting, anally.
DEPRESSANT	Alcohol	Slurred speech, loss of inhibitions, relaxation, feelings of happiness and wellbeing or depression. Large doses can cause unconsciousness or hangover.	Harmful	Can result in brain damage and other nervous system damage, heart, pancreas, stomach and liver damage and sometimes death. Withdrawal can produce sweating, tremors, convulsions and delirium.	Oral
	Minor Tranquillisers	Lasts 12-24 hours. Relief of anxiety and tension, drowsiness (possible sleep), lack of muscle coordination, blurred vision. In some cases excitability.	Harmful. Use only under medical supervision.	Depression, lack of muscle and speech coordination. Withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety, insomnia, tremors and convulsions can also occur while on a stable dose.	Oral, injecting, anally.
	Opioids (Heroin, Morphine, Codeine, Pethidine, Methadone, Opium)	Lasts 4-24 hours. Relief from pain and anxiety, feelings of wellbeing, decreased awareness of the outside world. Vomiting, drowsiness and sleep in some. High doses can cause unconsciousness and death.	Harmful. Use prescribed preparations only under medical supervision	High risk of overdose; HIV and hepatitis if sharing needles. Withdrawal symptoms are anxiety, sweating, cramps, runny nose, vomiting, insomnia, pain.	Oral, injecting, smoking, snorting
	Cannabis	Can last up to 5 hours. Relaxation, laughter, increased appetite, slowing down of time, loss of concentration, decreased coordination and bloodshot eyes. Can be hallucinogenic.	Long term effects are still to be assessed.	Respiratory complications. Can decrease concentration and memory. Psychiatric problems possible if schizophrenic condition already exists.	Oral, smoking.
	Inhalents & Solvents (Petrol, Glue, Aerosol Cans, Butane Gas)	Lasts 1-3 hours. Petrol sniffing effects can last up to 6 hours. Feelings of happiness, relaxation and drowsiness. Large amounts can cause illness and possibly sudden death.	Harmful	Liver, kidney and brain damage can occur. Suffocation caused by plastic bags, choking on vomit.	Inhalation
HALLUCINOGEN	Hallucinogens (LSD, Magic Mushrooms, Trips)	Lasts 6-12 hours. Hallucinations i.e. seeing, hearing, feeling or thinking things that don't exist. Anxious feelings, panic and nausea can occur.	Harmful	Can increase the risk of severe mental disturbances. Can cause 'flashbacks' (where drug experiences recur at any time).	Oral
	Injecting	HIV and hepatitis B and C infection can occur if sharing injecting equipment. Injecting with dirty syringes can cause abscesses and blood poisoning. New injecting equipment should be used every time.			

Note: Mixing drugs can sharply increase the effects of either substance, eg. driving ability can be markedly impaired by mixing alcohol with minor tranquillisers. © CEIDA 1985, revised 1995

of Drugs

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Taking a stand against drugs