



Other drugs

Other drugs facts at a glance

There is a wide range of other drugs out there that are just as dangerous as the more commonly used ecstasy or marijuana. These drugs include depressants (such as sleeping pills), hallucinogens like LSD, ketamine or inhalants. While they are legal, alcohol and tobacco are also drugs that can have dangerous consequences if misused.

Depressants

Sleeping pills, minor tranquillisers.

Other names include: Benzos, temazzies, Valium, tranks, sleepers, Serapax, serries, Mandrax, mandies.

Signs and symptoms: Drowsiness, confusion, uncoordination, slurred speech, depressed pulse rate, shallow breathing.

Potential problems: Anxiety, depression, restlessness, tremors, insomnia, changes in eyesight, high risk of addiction and suicide.

Otherwise known as 'downers', depressants act to slow or reduce the function of the brain and body. Mainly used as prescription medicines, they've also become popular as 'illicits' or mood-altering substances. They can cause anything from feelings of relaxation and mild contentment, to sedation and total blackout. Definitely don't use them with alcohol – you can stop breathing!

Most pharmaceutical drugs used for legitimate medical purposes are limited to pharmacist supply and require a prescription for purchase. Despite these controls, they are also diverted into the illicit market. Pharmaceuticals are used illicitly for a number of purposes. These include supplementing other drug use, enhancing the effects or managing the withdrawal symptoms from other drugs. They may also be misused to self-medicate, deal with dependence or to achieve an intoxicating effect. Non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs can result in serious health risks and can lead to addiction.

Hallucinogens

LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), Psilocybin.

Street name: LSD – acid, trips, wedges, windowpane, blotter, microdot. Psilocybin – mushies, blue meanies, magic mushrooms, gold tops.

Signs and symptoms: trance-like state, excitation, euphoria, increased pulse rate, insomnia, hallucinations, paranoia.

Potential problems: visual hallucinations may produce anxiety and fear, confusion and lack of coordination can result in greater risk of injury, self-inflicted injury, violent behaviour, paranoia, depression, anxiety and unpredictable flashbacks.

LSD was discovered in 1938 and is one of the most potent mood and perception altering drugs. Synthesised from lysergic acid, LSD is initially a clear or white crystalline substance. It is also odourless and soluble in water. LSD is highly potent and only very small doses are required to produce a hallucinogenic effect.

Psilocybin is a chemical with hallucinogenic properties that is found in certain species of mushrooms colloquially referred to as 'magic mushrooms'. These mushrooms are indigenous to tropical and sub-tropical regions of South America, Mexico and the US.

They typically contain less than 0.5 per cent psilocybin, as well as trace amounts of psilocin, another hallucinogenic substance. When consumed, psilocybin is metabolised by the body into psilocin.

In Australia, there are approximately 20 species of psilocybin-containing mushrooms. Grown in the forests of Victoria and New South Wales and parts of Queensland, the most common varieties consumed are 'gold tops', 'blue meanies' and 'liberty caps'.

Ketamine

Ketamine hydrochloride.

Street name: Green, K, super K, special K, Vitamin K.

Signs and symptoms: Altered perception, disorientation, drowsiness, hallucinations, numbness, strange muscle movements, nausea, vomiting.

Potential problems: Accidents from lack of coordination, quick development of tolerance, psychological dependence, psychosis, flashbacks, loss of memory, attention and vision impairment.

As ketamine is an anaesthetic, when used with depressant drugs such as alcohol, heroin or tranquillisers, it can be particularly harmful as it has the potential to shut the body down causing vital organs such as the lungs or heart to stop functioning.

Ketamine is considered a dissociative anaesthetic as it produces feelings of 'disassociation' from a person's environment as well as from one's self. It also has hallucinogenic effects and can impact on a person's senses and perception of reality.

Inhalants

Can include a number of general household and office products – solvents, aerosols, glue, petrol.

Street name: Nitrous oxide – laughing gas, whippits, nitrous. Amyl nitrate – snappers, poppers, pearlers, rushamines. Butyl nitrate – locker room, bolt, bullet, rush, climax, red gold.

Potential problems: Brain damage, paralysis, pains in the chest, muscles, joints, heart trouble, severe depression, fatigue, loss of appetite, bronchial spasm, sores on nose or mouth, nosebleeds, diarrhoea, bizarre or reckless behaviour, suffocation and sudden death.

Alcohol

It's easy to forget that alcohol is a drug too. Even though it is legal, drinking too much alcohol can have negative impacts on you and the people you are with.

It is important to know that factors such as gender, age, mental health, drug use and existing medical conditions can change how alcohol affects you.

The health risks that accumulate over a lifetime from alcohol increase progressively – this means that the more you drink, the greater the risk.

Drinking alcohol can affect your liver or cause brain damage, heart disease, high blood pressure and increases your risk of many cancers. It may also increase your risk of injury through road trauma, violence, falls and accidental death.

For more information and a range of resources please visit www.alcohol.gov.au or www.drinkingnightmare.gov.au.

Tobacco

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Australia. Tobacco use reduces not only your life expectancy but your quality of life. Many medical conditions caused by smoking can result not just in death, but in living for years with disabling health problems.

- Every cigarette is doing you damage.
- Smoking is the largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in Australia.
- Smoking kills over 15,000 Australia's each year.
- Cigarette smoke is toxic – it contains over 4,000 chemicals including those used in paint stripper, toilet cleaner, rat poison and nail polish remover.
- People near a smoker breathe in the poisons too, which can also cause them disease and premature death.

For more information about tobacco please visit www.quitnow.info.au.