

TYPES OF DRUGS

There are many different types of drugs. Hard or soft, uppers or downers, most harmful or least harmful, legal or illegal. The listed below are illegal and can be broadly categorised into three main areas:

- a. **Stimulant** – they **increase** the activity of the central nervous system (e.g. cocaine, crack & ecstasy)
- b. **Depressant** – they **decrease** the activity of the central nervous system (e.g. rohypnol & alcohol)
- c. **Hallucinogen** – they **alter** perceptions of reality and may result in hallucinogens (e.g. marijuana / weed)

A.

• **Cocaine:** This drug may be injected, inhaled (snorted), or smoked and may leave the user feeling restless, nervous, anxious, and irritable. Continued use of cocaine makes it more difficult to get the "high" like first time. Cocaine is addictive, and persons who are addicted to cocaine steal, sell their bodies for sex and put themselves or others in danger.

Cocaine affects the central nervous system and blocks the re-absorption

of the chemical dopamine, which is associated with pleasure. Immediate effects include reduced mental function and fatigue and increased hyperactivity. The long term cocaine users report depression, paranoia, nasal damage (in those who snort), and cocaine use can result in cardiac and respiratory arrest.

• **Crack:** Crack-cocaine (a derivative of cocaine), nicknamed "crack" or "rocks", is often sold in small, inexpensive dosage units frequently known as a "blast". A quarter gram or half gram on average, yielding 30 minutes – 1 hour of effect, if hits are taken every few minutes.

It is profoundly unwise to take crack-cocaine; it is far more addictive and dangerous than cocaine and is one of the most addictive drugs. Crack delivers an intensity of pleasure completely outside the normal range of human experience. However this short-lived 'rush' is followed by a 'crash'. This involves anxiety, depression, irritability, extreme fatigue and possibly paranoia.

Users are likely eventually to alienate family and friends. They tend to become isolated and suspicious. Most of their money and time is spent thinking about how to get more of the drug. The compulsion may become utterly obsessive. Crack addicts will often lie, cheat, steal and commit crimes of violence to get more.

• **Ecstasy:** also called MDMA or Adam, is a drug with hallucinogenic and amphetamine like properties. Ecstasy has been reported to contribute to heightened sexual experience, tranquillity, and happiness. Use of ecstasy causes confusion, depression, sleep problems, drug craving, severe anxiety, and paranoia and possibly psychotic episodes. It also increases heart rate and blood pressure, may cause muscle tension, involuntary teeth-clenching, nausea, blurred vision, rapid eye movement, faintness, chills or sweating.

B.

• **Rohypnol:**

Also known as "La Rocha" and "Roofies", is a small white tablet with Roche inscribed on one side and with a one or two encircled indicating the mg dosage. Rohypnol is usually taken orally and causes the user to feel intoxicated then sleepy.



It may last up to eight hours. Users exhibit slurred speech, impaired judgment and difficulty walking. It can cause deep sedation, breathing problems and blackouts. Sometimes the drug causes the opposite effect and the user becomes aggressive.

Many rapists use rohypnol to drug their victims. Rohypnol is considered a sexual assault drug because of the potential to cause blackouts and amnesia at high doses. The most common method used to drug someone is to put it into a drink at a bar, nightclub, or party. Because rohypnol is a tasteless substance the drink would not taste any different. This drug is also known as the 'rape drug'.

C.

• **Marijuana/Weed:**

Weed, ganja, dope, marijuana, cannabis all names used for the plant Cannabis Sativa. This drug contains THC, a chemical that changes the way you think, feel and act. With regular use, people become psychologically dependent on weed. They crave the "high" and become edgy and anxious if they cannot get the drug.

People who use large doses on a daily basis can become physically dependent and suffer withdrawal symptoms when they stop using the drug. For a week or so, they may have trouble sleeping, feel anxious and irritable and lose their appetite.



Some people mix the marijuana with crack or other substances which could become very addictive.

There are some medicinal purposes for the Cannabis Sativa plant. The dosages have to be taken in small amounts, and usually not enough to cause a person to become intoxicated or to feel the 'high'.

How will weed affect me?

Weed affects people in different ways, depending on the mood they are in, how they expect they are going to feel, the amount they take, how strong it is and whether they eat it or smoke it.

Soon after smoking weed, most people feel 'high' – more relaxed and talkative and less concerned about what they say or do. However, weed makes some people nervous, dizzy and upset. Later on, you may become reflective and sleepy.

Physically, you will probably notice that your eyes redden, your heart beats faster and your appetite is enormous (referred to as the munchies)

Weed affects your balance, judgement, memory, reactions and perceptions, especially if mixed with alcohol. In fact, very large amounts can cause hallucinations – seeing and hearing things that do not really exist.

What are the health risks of using weed?

- Long after the 'high' is gone, the drug remains in the brain and affects memory and learning. You will be less able to speak, read, compute or reason. It also slows down your reaction time, making it dangerous to do things like drive a car or operate machinery
- Weed causes hormonal changes that could alter patterns of growth and sexual development. When weed is used by women during pregnancy, babies may be born prematurely, with low birth weights or other abnormalities

Weed smoke contains tar and cancer causing chemicals and causes diseases to the lungs

For people with a history of emotional problems or mental illness, regular weed use can bring on their symptoms or make them feel worse.

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