

cannabis

vapes

alcohol

cocaine

MDMA/ecstasy

speed
(amphetamine)

tobacco

nitrous oxide

caffeine



Effects cards

dizziness or blurred vision

more willing to take risks

feeling relaxed and happy

chatty and sociable

thoughts and feelings intensified

hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not really there)

raised heart rate and temperature

feeling confident

awake and alert

feeling anxious or irritable

giggly and silly

sleepiness or drowsiness



Risk cards

injuries from falls or accidents

long term illness or disease

sickness

lethargy - no energy - tiredness

difficulty concentrating or remembering things

fainting or breathing difficulties

becoming dependent on the drug

risk of heart attack

mental health problems

overheating or dehydration

money worries or problems

affects a person's looks

risk of criminal record, fine or prison

confusion, panic or paranoia

unable to know how strong the drug is

difficulty sleeping or relaxing

harm to others or the environment

increased risk of illness such as colds or flu



Alcohol

Alcohol is found in drinks such as beer, wine and spirits. Some alcoholic drinks are stronger than others (such as spirits, e.g. gin, vodka, rum or whisky) – these usually include high levels of alcohol and so are drunk in smaller amounts or ‘mixed’ with non-alcoholic drinks).

The amount of alcohol found in drinks is measured in units. Adults who choose to drink are advised to drink no more than 14 units a week, over a week (this is equivalent to approximately 6 pints of beer or 6 glasses of wine) and advised to have several alcohol-free days a week.

Children should not drink alcohol*

Effects

The effect on mood will depend on how the person was feeling before drinking alcohol – alcohol is likely to heighten that mood or feeling, for example:

- Some people feel more relaxed or sociable
- Some people will feel more angry
- Some people will feel more withdrawn or lonely
- Feeling more or less self-conscious
- More willing to take risks
- People absorb alcohol at different rates so some may become ‘drunk’ (feel effects more strongly) more quickly than others – this might include a lack of co-ordination, blurred vision and slurred speech
- The more alcohol that is consumed, the stronger the effects

Risks

- Too much alcohol can lead to sickness, dizziness, falling over or fainting, memory loss
- Inability to control own behaviour
- Aggressive behaviour
- Injury or accidents may occur – it is dangerous to drive or operate machinery after drinking alcohol
- Feeling ill (e.g. tiredness, headaches and sickness) the next day is common if someone drinks too much the day before
- Drinking a lot or often over time can become an unhealthy habit - leading to feelings of agitation and anxiety - and people can become dependent on alcohol
- Drinking more than the recommended guidelines can cause damage to the brain and body, illnesses such as cancer, strokes, liver disease and depression

Laws

- It is illegal to give a child under 5 alcohol
- It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to buy alcohol
- Even if someone is over 18, shops can refuse to sell alcohol to someone under the age of 21 (Challenge 21)
- The police can confiscate alcohol from someone they suspect to be under 18 in a public place
- It is illegal for an adult to buy alcohol for someone under 18 (except where that person buys beer, wine or cider for someone aged 16 or 17 to be drunk with a table meal, while accompanied by a person over 18)

- It is illegal to sell to, or purchase, alcohol for someone who is already drunk
- Drink driving is illegal - it is safest for someone not to drink any alcohol if driving

*The UK Chief Medical Officers advise an alcohol-free childhood. If a young person (aged 15-17) does drink alcohol, it should only be rarely and with guidance from a parent or carer, in a supervised environment (such as at home) and even then, only a small amount should be consumed

Caffeine

Caffeine is found in drinks such as tea, coffee, cola, energy drinks, sports drinks and some medicines. Energy drinks often contain high levels of caffeine, sugar and may also contain other stimulants.

Effects

- Caffeine is a 'stimulant' meaning it can temporarily make people feel like they have lots of energy, more alert or less tired
- Can make the body produce urine more quickly
- Caffeine can affect some people more than others and its effects can depend on how much is consumed – usually the more caffeine consumed, the stronger the effects

Risks

- For most adults, tea and coffee can be consumed in moderation, as part of a balanced diet, without detrimental health effects
- However, drinking lots of caffeine or stimulants can lead to restlessness or an inability to relax and difficulties sleeping
- Caffeinated drinks often also include high levels of sugar or flavoured syrups which can cause weight gain and tooth decay
- Caffeinated drinks are not suitable for toddlers and young children
- Pregnant women should also reduce their intake of caffeine

Laws

- There are no legal restrictions on the sale or use of caffeine in food and drink, although some medicines which contain caffeine may only be available on a doctor's prescription
- Some shops and supermarkets have chosen to only sell highly-caffeinated products to people aged 16 and over

Cannabis

Cannabis is a drug that comes from the Cannabis plant. It can be smoked, eaten or vaped. It usually comes in the form of dried herbal material including dried flowers, leaves, and stems, or as an oil, or solid material. It is often mixed with tobacco when smoked. Some types of cannabis are stronger than others.

Effects

Changes how the brain works:

- Some people feel relaxed and happy
- Some people feel chatty and giggly
- Some people feel very tired
- Can make people hungry
- Some people have a sense of time slowing down
- Thoughts and feelings may become much more heightened or experienced more deeply
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not really there)

Risks

- Sickness, dizziness or fainting
- Difficulty concentrating and remembering things
- Confusion or anxiety, paranoia
- Disturbed sleep
- Mood swings, depression
- Lethargy – no motivation to do things
- People can become dependent on cannabis (they feel they need it all the time)
- Injury or accidents – dangerous to drive or operate machinery after using cannabis
- **If Cannabis is smoked with tobacco, all the risks associated with tobacco also apply (see Tobacco fact sheet)**
- Cannabis may also be mixed with other chemicals (which may be unknown) and which can also be harmful to the body

Laws

- Cannabis is illegal to possess, give away or sell (class B drug)
 - Possessing cannabis could mean receiving a police warning or on the spot fine (£90) but could also lead to a criminal record* or up to 5 years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both
 - Supplying (selling or giving away) cannabis, even to friends, could mean up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both
 - Driving after using cannabis is illegal and can lead to a fine, driving ban or prison
- *Having a criminal record can affect a person's ability to apply for certain jobs or travel to different countries, such as United States of America (USA).

Cocaine

Cocaine is an illegal drug. It is derived from the leaves of the coca plant. It comes as a white powder (coke) and is snorted through the nose or in small rocks (crack cocaine) which are smoked.

Effects

- Can make someone feel happy and excited; alert and wide awake; confident and chatty; more animated; overconfident; arrogant; restless; unable to relax
- Increases heart rate (makes the heart beat faster)
- Raises body temperature, so someone might feel hot

Risks

- Sickness
- Anxiety and panic
- Regular use can lead to depression and/or paranoia and other mental health issues
- Can be fatal – risk of heart attack or stroke and increased risk for people with heart conditions
- Snorting causes damage to the nose and smoking causes breathing problems and chest pains
- Addictive – people can become dependent on cocaine (they feel they need it all the time)
- Increased risks to personal safety as may be more likely to do something dangerous

Laws

- Cocaine is illegal to possess, give away or sell (class A)
 - Possessing cocaine can mean up to 7 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both, and a criminal record*
 - Supplying (selling or giving away) cocaine, even to friends, can mean up to life in prison, an unlimited fine or both
 - Driving after using cocaine is illegal and can lead to a fine, driving ban or prison
- *Having a criminal record can affect a person's ability to apply for certain jobs or travel to different countries, such as the USA.

Nitrous Oxide

A colourless gas that is stored in a small metal canister and inhaled, sometimes from balloons. It is also called laughing gas or balloons.

Effects

- Feelings of calm and relaxation
- Euphoria (extreme happiness)
- Giggles and laughter
- Dizziness
- Slows down the brain and the body's responses

Risks

- Severe headache or feeling sick
- Inability to 'think straight'
- Risk of accidents from dizziness, from taking too much or using it in a dangerous place
- Short but intense feelings of paranoia
- Lack of oxygen – inability to breathe properly
- Fainting or unconsciousness
- If used in large doses a person might see or hear something that is not really there (hallucinations)
- Regular use can lead to loss of vitamin B12 and low white blood cells in the body, causing illness such as anaemia and nerve damage (numbness in fingers and toes)
- Can affect the nervous system, heart, reproductive health and lung health
- Inhaling any gas direct from a canister is very dangerous because it is under such high pressure – it can cause spasms of the throat, cause someone to stop breathing and can be fatal

Laws

- Nitrous oxide is a class C drug that is illegal to possess, give away or sell, if it is not being used for medical or dental purposes
 - Supplying (selling or giving away) or producing nitrous oxide can lead to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both and a criminal record
 - Unlawful possession can lead to either an unlimited fine, a visible community punishment or a caution - which would appear on a criminal record
 - Repeated misuse can lead to up to 2 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both
 - Driving after using nitrous oxide is illegal and can lead to a fine, driving ban or prison
- *Having a criminal record can affect a person's ability to apply for certain jobs or travel to different countries, such as the USA.

Speed (amphetamine)

An illegal drug. It usually comes in an off-white or pink powder that sometimes looks like small crystals, which is dabbed onto gums, snorted or swallowed.

Effects

- It can make people feel excited, alert and energised or wide awake for long periods of time
- Some people can become very chatty or talkative
- Some people can feel agitated, irritated or aggressive
- It can reduce appetite
- Speeds up the heart rate

Risks

- Difficulties sleeping or relaxing
- It can cause confusion, anxiety or panic
- Increases mental health problems
- It puts a strain on the heart leading to high blood pressure or heart problems and heart attack
- Using speed regularly can lead to problems with learning and concentration
- For days after use people can feel very tired, lethargic, sad or depressed
- Taking a lot can affect the immune system so there is an increased risk of colds and flu
- In high doses it can create hallucinations - seeing or hearing things that are not really there
- Regular use can make someone feel dependent on the drug, meaning they want more
- It may be 'mixed' with other dangerous drugs or chemicals which may be unknown
- Injury or accidents - dangerous to drive or operate machinery after using the drug

Laws

- Speed is illegal to possess, give away or sell (class B)
 - Possessing speed can mean up to 5 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both, and a criminal record*
 - Supplying (selling or giving away) speed, even to friends, can mean up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both
 - Driving after using speed is illegal and can lead to a fine, driving ban or prison
- *Having a criminal record can affect a person's ability to apply for certain jobs or travel to different countries, such as the USA.

Vapes (e-cigarettes)

A vape is a device that allows someone to inhale vapour (rather than smoke). They work by heating a liquid that contains chemicals and some (but not all) contain nicotine. There are different types: some look like cigarettes, a small tube or pen, and others are small pots of liquid.

Effects

- Vapes often contain nicotine which raises blood pressure and increases heart rate
- When nicotine enters the body, it can make people feel relaxed and calm, or increase alertness depending upon how the person is feeling beforehand
- Cravings for nicotine can make someone feel anxious or irritable
- When combined with face-face support from a smoking cessation or medical professional, vapes or e-cigarettes can help people to quit smoking – by helping them to manage and reduce the amount of nicotine they are taking in
- There is currently no evidence that vaping causes harm to others (like second-hand smoke from cigarettes)

Risks

- Vapes are not risk free, and more research is needed to understand any potential long-term harms, but use carries less risk than smoking cigarettes
- Although vapes don't contain tobacco or produce carbon monoxide (two of the most damaging elements in tobacco smoke) the liquid and vapour do contain potentially harmful chemicals (although in much lower levels than cigarettes)
- Vapes contain nicotine which is addictive and causes a craving for the user to smoke more
- Vapes must be used with care (such as using the correct charger) to ensure they do not pose an increased risk of causing fire

Laws

- Someone must be aged 18 years and over to buy vapes/e-cigarettes
- It's illegal for an adult to buy vapes for someone under the age of age 18
- Vaping is not allowed on buses, planes, trains or at train stations
- It is up to the owner of other public places to decide if vaping is allowed (for example in bars, restaurants or cafes)

MDMA (Ecstasy)

An illegal drug that usually comes in pills or tablets, a powder or white/grey crystals. It is swallowed, dabbed onto gums or sometimes snorted through the nose.

Effects

- Can make people feel happy and chatty, energised and alert
- Can make people feel confident and sociable
- Feelings and surroundings, or music, or colours can become more intense
- Raises body temperature
- Increases heart rate
- Some people feel tingles or tightening of muscles

Risks

- Difficult to know what is in the drug – it may be 'mixed' with other dangerous drugs or chemicals
- Difficult to know how strong the drug is or how much the drug will affect someone
- Sickness
- Can cause anxiety, confusion, panic or paranoia
- Body can dangerously overheat or dehydrate – can be fatal
- This can also lead to accidents where people try to cool down or drink too much water to rehydrate
- Liver, kidney and heart problems (people with asthma, epilepsy or heart conditions can have a dangerous reaction)
- People can become dependent or want to take more to get more of a 'buzz'
- Long term use, when used in higher amounts can cause memory problems or depression
- Increased chance of colds and sore throats
- Injury or accidents – dangerous to drive or operate machinery after using MDMA

Laws

- MDMA is illegal to have, give away or sell (class A)
 - Possessing MDMA can mean up to 7 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both, and a criminal record*
 - Supplying (selling or giving away) MDMA, even to friends, can mean life in prison, an unlimited fine or both
 - Driving after using MDMA is illegal and can lead to a fine, driving ban or prison
- *Having a criminal record can affect a person's ability to apply for certain jobs or travel to different countries, such as the USA.

Tobacco

Tobacco is a plant. The leaves are dried and shredded and sold as factory-made cigarettes, rolled tobacco (roll-ups) or shisha which is smoked through a water pipe (hookah). The drug in tobacco is nicotine, but cigarettes also contain other chemicals that harm the body.

Effects

- Contains nicotine which raises heart rate and blood pressure
- Many smokers believe that smoking helps them relax but nicotine interferes with the chemicals in the brain meaning when they haven't smoked for a while they have a craving to do so. They may feel irritable and anxious until they can smoke. These feelings are temporarily relieved when they smoke again








Risks








- Sickness and dizziness (particularly for first time smokers)
- Breath, hair and clothes smell
- Nicotine in tobacco is addictive
- Increased anxiety, tension, irritability and possibly depression over time
- Tar in tobacco smoke can lead to stained teeth and nails
- Stops oxygen getting to the skin which can lead to a dull complexion and premature ageing (wrinkles)
- Tobacco smoke contains harmful chemicals which damage most of the body's organs and can lead to long term or life-threatening disease (such as lung disease, heart disease, diabetes and different types of cancer)
- Second-hand smoke means other people are also at risk of these diseases (particularly children as they have less developed lungs, airways and immune systems).
- Causes weak and brittle bones (arthritis)
- Reduces fertility (ability to make a baby) in both men and women
- If a pregnant woman smokes it can harm the unborn baby
- If shisha is smoked, more smoke is inhaled (so, smoking shisha for 20-minutes is equivalent to smoking approximately 25 cigarettes)
- Risk of accidental fire

Laws

- It is illegal to smoke in all public enclosed areas and workplaces (including restaurants, bars and pubs or vehicles used for work purposes)
- Smoking in a car with someone under the age of 18 is against the law
- Illegal for shops to sell cigarettes to anyone under the age of 18
- Illegal for an adult to buy cigarettes for someone under the age of 18

| Changing scenario | How does this change the level of risk? |
|---|---|
| <p>Jim, 51, drinks four pints of beer most days of the week.</p>  | |
| <p>Jenny's cousin Jay says he has got some cannabis for them to try and it will be fun. They are 17.</p>  | |
| <p>Indie, 15, is having meal with her family to celebrate Gran's birthday. Indie's mum says that Indie can have a small glass of wine.</p>  | |
| <p>Dawn, 45, has smoked cigarettes for 25 years. Dawn has decided to stop smoking cigarettes and try vapes instead.</p>  | |
| <p>At a party, Alba, 19, buys a tablet from someone, because they have heard it will help them have an even better time.</p>  | |
| <p>Mo, 14, skips breakfast every day and drinks three cans of energy drinks on the way to school instead.</p>  | |
| <p>Shanise, 16, meets up with friends by the canal. She notices some of them are inhaling something from a cannister.</p>  | |

| Scenario | Who is involved? | What is the drug? (May be 'unknown') | Identify at least one potential risk |
|---|------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| <p>Jim, 51, drinks four pints of beer most days of the week.</p>  | | | |
| <p>Jenny's cousin Jay says he has some cannabis for them to try and it will be fun. They are 17.</p>  | | | |
| <p>Indie, 15, is having meal with her family to celebrate Gran's birthday, Indie's mum says that Indie can have a small glass of wine.</p>  | | | |
| <p>Dawn, 45, has smoked cigarettes for 25 years. Dawn has decided to stop smoking cigarettes and try vapes instead.</p>  | | | |
| <p>At a party, Mo, 19, buys a tablet from someone, because they have heard it will help them have an even better time.</p>  | | | |
| <p>Alba, 14, skips breakfast every day and drinks three cans of energy drinks on the way to school instead.</p>  | | | |
| <p>Shanise, 16, meets up with friends by the canal. Some of them are inhaling something from a cannister.</p>  | | | |

| Changing scenario | How does this change the level of risk? |
|--|---|
| <p>Jim cuts down to drinking two pints of beer, only on three days a week.</p>  | |
| <p>Jenny and Jay also drink beer whilst smoking the cannabis.</p>  | |
| <p>After drinking the wine, Indie sneaks off to the kitchen and drinks more glasses of wine.</p>  | |
| <p>Dawn stops smoking cigarettes and vaping completely.</p>  | |
| <p>Alba decides not to take the tablet.</p>  | |
| <p>Mo really likes the energy drinks and starts drinking them on the way home from school too.</p>  | |
| <p>Shanise decides not to join in or meet up with her friends.</p>  | |