

# Drug awareness

## INTRODUCTION

All drugs have different effects on different people and some are highly addictive. Smoking a joint won't make you an instant addict, but trying heroin isn't ever advisable. In order to equip readers with the knowledge of drugs and the harmful effects they have, we provide you with this guide. You will find detailed descriptions and side effects of most drugs given you might come in contact with. **Read them carefully as it could save your life!**

Every drug abuser is a victim, not only of pain and addiction, but possibly of premature death. To all learners, you are going to be offered a drug, whether it's alcohol or ecstasy. What's more, you're unlikely to see users drop down dead or turn into instant degenerates as promised by your guidance teacher. Having said that, the greatest mistake you can make is to presume that all drugs are harmless.

## ALCOHOL

This is a legally available chemical substance and central nervous system depressant consumed in the form of wine, beer or spirits.

**Effects:** A couple of drinks induce a feeling of drunkenness, often accompanied by nausea, vomiting, disorientation, loss of inhibition and blackouts. Alcohol is generally consumed as a relaxant or social refreshment. Alcohol consumption becomes problematic when it is long-term and heavy, indicating psychological dependence. Excessive consumption over a long time can cause psychological and physical damage.

## ACID (LSD/A)

One of the most powerful mind-altering substances around, Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD) is distributed in microdots, on pieces of blotter with cartoon-based designs and names (e.g. Gemini, Batman, Bart Simpson), or in liquid form.

**Street name:** A., Acid.

**Effects:** Each person's experience of acid is individual. A trip starts 30-60 minutes after ingestion and lasts 5-24 hours, the most common being 8-12 hours. Acid significantly alters perception, mood and psychological processes and can impair motor co-ordination, judgement and skills. You may experience rushing thoughts, bizarre free association and / or visual effects such as intensified colours, distorted shapes and sizes and movement in stationary objects. Distortion of your sense of time and space is also common. Some users report hallucinations, but these are rare. Other side effects include "speediness", sweating, nervousness, jaw grinding, and occasionally, insomnia.

## COCAINE & CRACK (ROCKS)

This is a central nervous system stimulant with anaesthetic properties. Cocaine is commonly found as a fine white powder that is crushed finely and snorted, rubbed on the gums or taken intravenously, but it comes in various forms: crack, rocks, freebase.

**Street names:** Coke, Nose candy, Charlie, Snow, and Schnaaf.

**Effects:** Snorting coke induces a 20-minute high whereas smoking a crack gives an intense high for about two minutes, followed by a lesser feeling of pleasure that lasts 10-20 minutes. Crack is purer than powdered coke and the rush is more intense (**and highly addictive**). Paranoia and aggressiveness occur with heavy use. Physiological effects include an increased heart rate, constricted blood vessels, increased body temperature and stimulation of the pleasure centres of the brain. You will experience feelings of confidence and invincibility depending on how much you take. Too much will induce overconfidence, paranoid psychoses and traits of selfishness and aggression.

**Note:** Death as a consequence of heart attacks or seizures is a real possibility; as is brain damage and damage to the nasal cavity.

## **DIET PILLS**

Diet Pills can be hard-coated tablets or capsules filled with granules which are swallowed. They are registered drugs, but still pose a risk to your health. Effects occur within 20-45. The active ingredients in the pills are designed to be released over a 12-hour period.

**Street names:** Obies, Nobies, O's, Yellows, Thinz, No.1 and Obex-LA.

**Effects:** Diet pills cause feelings of energy, wakefulness and exhilaration. An increased heart rate, dry mouth, muscle tremors, dizziness, occasional hallucinations, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach cramps, constipation, dilation of pupils, nervousness, agitation and a reduced appetite are side effects. Excessive sleepiness, increased appetite and depression are withdrawal symptoms. Snorting the contents of capsules causes serious nosebleeds. Overdose symptoms are anxiety, insomnia, paranoid psychoses and delusions.

## **ECSTASY**

Ecstasy (E) or methylene-dioxy-meth-amphetamine (MDMA) is generally available in the form of small pressed tablets. E can also be bought in capsule form or as loose powder. The tablets are often labelled; e.g. Doves, Pink Champagne. Quality varies considerably between batches and brands. E is usually taken orally though some users prefer to insert tablets anally.

**Street names:** E or X.

**Effects:** It takes 30-60 minutes for the drug to take effect. The peak effect lasts 2-4 hours and is followed by a smooth come down. Physically, you will experience raised blood pressure and body temperature, increased heart beat, tingling skin, sweating and dilated pupils. Nausea, vomiting and unsteadiness are often side effects. E is a mood-altering drug that affects your perception of the world and opens up your emotions. The feelings are usually positive and euphoric but panic and anxiety can result. Effects vary according to who you are with, where you are, how you are feeling and of course what you take. After-effects include tiredness or afterglow for 24 hours or more.

**Note:** Regular use puts strain on the body and brain, depleting a chemical in your brain called serotonin and resulting in moodiness, depression and lethargy. Overheating (fever) is a danger of taking E; to counteract this, drink lots of water, but not more than your body can get rid of through sweating and urinating.

## **EPHEDRINE**

Available in legally sold products like energy drinks and various tablets and capsules, it is generally taken orally or snorted, but this is extremely painful.

**Effects:** The effect is similar to that of adrenaline, only longer lasting. You will experience increased energy levels, heightened moods and tingling sensations on the skull. The effects are not incremental with increased dosage.

**Note:** These drugs may enhance athletic performance via physical and psychological stimulation, but aggression, anxiety and tremors can negate the benefits. As a stimulant, ephedrine can cause rapid or irregular heart-beat and high blood pressure leading to dehydration and bad circulation. Complications include heart irregularities and strokes, even death. **Do not use in conjunction with E.**

## **GHB**

An odourless, colourless liquid, salty to the taste, Gamma-Hydroxy Butyrate (GHB) is also available in tablet or powder form and is taken orally.

**Street names:** Liquid E, fantasy and Gamma-OH.

**Effects:** These become apparent after 10-15 minutes and peak after 20-30 minutes, the effects last 2-4 hours. The primary effect of GHB is euphoria, but it can also be a downer. Small doses will make you feel relaxed and uninhibited. In moderation, GHB can cause sexual arousal and it has been used as an aphrodisiac. The negative side of this factor is reports of GHB being used as a "date-rape" drug. High doses of GHB lower muscle tone and slow reaction time, interfering with co-ordination, therefore, do not drive or operate any machinery while under the influence. It is very difficult to gauge what a safe dose of GHB is and this is its greatest danger. How GHB will affect you depends on your body weight, general state of health and mind and the concentration of the liquid. With a large dose you may talk incessantly, slur your speech, have difficulty focusing or feel drowsy, nauseous and incoherent. Overdose can cause amnesia, respiratory difficulties and even loss of consciousness.

## **HEROIN**

Derived from the opium poppy, heroin is one of a group of pain killing drugs. Heroin can be injected into a vein, muscle or under the skin, which brings on an almost immediate effect. The effects are slower acting and less intense when heroin is smoked or snorted.

**Street names:** Junk, smack, brown, skag, H, gear and brown sugar.

**Effects:** Almost immediate, however H is taken. Slight nausea is common before a feeling of warmth spreads through the body removing any feelings of physical pain or emotional distress. Heroin is a powerful painkiller and a central nervous system depressant by slowing the heart rate and breathing reflex. Constipation occurs and blood vessels dilate (hence the feeling of warmth through the body). Normal doses of heroin do not affect the ability of the user to talk and think; with high doses, however, the user is sedated, drowsy, pupils become tiny, the user's eyes roll back and loss of consciousness is possible. Overdosing leads to respiratory failure and possibly death.

**Note:** Heroin is severely physically addictive. Withdrawal is brutal and the symptoms (muscle spasms, sweating, nausea, vomiting, physical pain, short attention span, anxiety and insomnia) can last up to a week.

## **KETAMINE**

Used for veterinary purposes, ketamine hydrochloride is a strong anaesthetic that is available in powder (white), capsules or liquid form, and is snorted, swallowed or injected respectively.

**Street names:** Ket, special K, vitamin K and K.

**Effects:** The effects (a powerful hallucinatory trip followed by a softer longer lasting trip) are immediate when injected, but start 5-10 minutes after snorting and 20 minutes after swallowing. Physically, users experience difficulty walking, standing and talking, temporary memory loss, numbness, drowsiness and nausea. Out of body experiences are common as the mind dissociates itself from the body. Normal thinking is blocked, as are memory recall and sensory input. The brain produces another reality, a hallucination, to fill this void.

## **MAGIC MUSHROOMS**

Psilocybin and psilon are the mind-altering chemicals found in mushrooms that induce hallucinations, otherwise known as magic mushrooms. These chemicals are structurally similar to serotonin, the chemical in your brain that is affected by E and LSD. Magic mushrooms have a distinctive, not altogether pleasant, taste. They are usually dried and greyish brown in colour. Most people swallow mushrooms with food or drink because of the taste. Smoking is uncommon and gives a severe trip.

**Street names:** Mushies, shrooms and Mexican magic mushrooms.

**Effects:** Fresh mushrooms are stronger than dried. Potency varies with the type of mushroom and growing conditions with one gram being the average dose. The effects are similar to those of LSD, coming on quickly and lasting around 6 hours. Hallucinations are visual and mental producing patterns in vision and regression to childlike behaviour. Users report feelings of loss of ego and extreme introspections as well as a sense of unity with the universe. You may experience nausea and loss of co-ordination. The after effects are mental rather than physical.

## **MANDRAX**

After dagga, probably the most popular illegal drug in South Africa, Mandrax or methaqualone is a sedative hypnotic. It usually takes the form of white scored tablets but sometimes comes in light or dark blue capsules. They can be taken orally or injected, but most commonly the tablets are crushed, mixed with dagga and smoked.

**Street names:** Buttons, white pipe (when mixed with dagga)

**Effects:** Mandrax is a central nervous system depressant. Small doses cause feelings of relaxation. Users claim that it also produces sexual arousal; this is in fact due to the depression of the emotional inhibitory centres in the brain. Large doses produce blurred vision, impaired thinking, slurred speech, impaired perception of time and space, slowed reflexes and breathing and reduced sensitivity to pain. Anaemia, impaired liver function, chronic intoxication, headaches, impaired vision and speech and depression are effects. An overdose causes unconsciousness, coma and death.

## **MARIJUANA**

Classified as an hallucinogen, the active ingredient in marijuana is THC. It occurs in two forms, dried leaves and a resin extract called hash, and can be taken in a number of ways; smoked in a rolled joint, pipe, bottle neck or bubbly bubbly or eaten or brewed and drink as tea.

**Street names:** Dagga, dope, mabange, cannabis, ganja, dube, doob, splif...the list goes on.

**Effects:** Again the effects vary with the quality and quantity and the high will last anything from 15 minutes to a few hours. Users feel the effects soon after inhaling, when eaten the effect is slower, but can last much longer (be careful of how much you eat). The physical effects are red eyes, dry mouth, increased heart rate, increased appetite (munchies), thirst and drowsiness. Mental effects such as mild euphoria, occasional hallucinations, distorted perception, short-term memory loss, giggling and possible anxiety and paranoia accompany these. Long term effects include loss of motivation and memory loss.

## **ROHYPNOL**

An extremely strong tranquilliser (10 times strong than Valium) that is usually prescribed for sleep disorders. Rohypnol is actually the brand name for flunitrazepam and is taken orally, in tablet form.

**Street names:** rophies, ropies, ruffies, roche, R-2, Mexican, rib and rope.

**Effects:** Rohypnol is a sedative, producing amnesia, muscle relaxation and slow physical performance within 30 minutes of consumption. These effects last around 8 hours. Users often mix Rohypnol with other drugs and alcohol to enhance the effects of these substances and to make come down smoother.

**Note:** Using Rohypnol with other drugs can cause amnesia and loss of inhibition, making it a popular date rape drug. Rohypnol is physically and psychologically addictive. Withdrawal is severe and causes headaches, muscle pain, hallucinations, confusion and convulsions.

## **SPEED**

A central nervous system stimulant, which can be snorted, smoked, injected or swallowed (in the form of tablets or by mixing it into a drink). It gives you a rush similar to an adrenaline rush. Speed is available in crystals, chunks, tablets, capsules and powder (white / yellow colour).

**Street names:** Amphetamine, ice, glass, crystal meth, bennies and uppers.

**Effects:** The initial effect is quick and lasts 4-6 hours. Low doses produce increased heart rate, body temperature and blood pressure, rapid breathing and loss of appetite. High doses cause irritability, sweating, headaches, confusion and jaw tension.

**Note:** Users quickly develop a tolerance and this leads to abuse. Health risks are high and a psychological dependence to feelings of well being and confidence is common. Heavy, long-term use can lead to amphetamine psychosis, paranoia, anxiety and distortions of perception. Be careful of chalk and flour cut into speed, this is very dangerous, especially when injecting. Don't use in conjunction with E as it places a strain on the heart and causes fever.

## **NICOTINE**

Found in tobacco products e.g. cigarettes (along with 4000 other harmful chemicals), nicotine is a legally available and highly addictive substance. Usually smoked in the form of cigarettes or in a pipe, chewed (chewing tobacco) or snorted (snuff).

**Effects:** Nicotine produces a warm feeling often confused with a feeling of relaxation. In fact, nicotine is a central nervous system stimulant. Smoking releases epinephrine, a hormone that creates psychological stress. The physical effects of nicotine consumption and smoking include dizziness, diminished sense of smell and taste, frequent colds with complications, smoker's cough, gastric ulcers, chronic bronchitis, increased heart rate and blood pressure. Long-term use leads to possible emphysema, heart disease, strokes and cancer of the mouth, pharynx, uterus and bladder.

## CONCLUSION

An appeal is made to all parents and guardians to take note of your child's whereabouts. Ask yourself the following questions: Is my child attending school? Is he / she on drugs and / or alcohol? Over the weekend, is he / she with friend(s) you know? Do you know what time he / she will return home? Do you know how he / she spends his / her pocket money?

**Your child is our future. Get to know your child before it is too late!**

For more information or if you need help or just need someone to talk to, please call SANCA at 011 726-4210 and speak to a trained counsellor.

**...PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR POLICE FORUM AND SAY NO TO DRUG ABUSE NOW...**

