

Get The LOWO OWN on alcohol & other drugs





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GET THE LOWDOWN ON ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS

Alcohol and drugs are pretty much everywhere these days. For this reason, simply 'avoiding' them can be a fairly difficult thing to do.

At some point you will find yourself in a situation where drink and drugs are available and you might have to make a choice - Do I say yes or no?

This isn't always an easy decision & everyone will have their own reasons for saying yes or no. One of the first things you should do is find out a bit more about alcohol and drugs before you're faced with this decision.

This booklet gives you information on both alcohol and drugs and their effects; and if you do decide to use either alcohol or drugs, some tips to keep safe.





ALCOHOL - THE FACTS

The LowDown...

Alcohol is a legal drug. It comes in many liquid forms and is freely available to over 18's. It is a chemical produced by fermenting grains, fruits or vegetables. Fermentation is a process that uses yeast or bacteria to change the sugars in the food into alcohol. It has a 'depressant' effect on the brain, meaning it slows down your brain and how quickly you can react to things happening around you.

As alcohol is a legally sold drug, it has many brand names. It is found in wines, beers, ciders, alcopops and in spirits such as vodka, whiskey, rum, gin and tequila. It is also found in cleaning products and other solvents.

The DownLow

- How alcohol affects you will depend on how much you drink, the strength of the alcohol and the pace at which you drink. It is also influenced by:
 - What mood you were in before you started to drink
 - The people around you or if you're drinking on your own
 - Your weight
 - If you're tired or sick
 - If you're a woman, the stage you are at in your hormonal cycle will have an effect
 - If you're binge drinking
 - How recently you have eaten
- Alcohol lowers your inhibitions so many people drink it as it makes them feel more relaxed and confident.
- Some people drink to block out things that are on their mind.

- Alcohol is a depressant drug which means it slows down your brain and makes your responses slower. It can make your speech slurred, affect your balance and will affect your ability to make decisions.
- If you drink too much in a short space of time, your body will not be able to absorb the alcohol. This can end up making you sick and can lead to alcohol poisoning, which means you may have to go to hospital for treatment.
- Drinking too much can also lead to passing out and having 'black outs'- which means you forget what you've done.





- Drinking alcohol can increase the likelihood of acting in a violent way.
 Violence is not OK and if you are becoming violent when you drink it may be a good idea to look at how you can manage your alcohol use.
- After tobacco, alcohol is the leading cause of death by drug use in Ireland and accounts for 1 in 4 deaths in young men aged 15-29 years of age.
- Long term overuse of alcohol can lead to: addiction, psychological problems, obesity, damage to your brain, liver and stomach.

Cannabis, weed, marijuana or hash comes from the naturally grown hemp plant. It contains the chemical 'THC' and comes in the form of leaf, thick buds, chunks of resin and sticky oil. It is often mixed with tobacco and usually smoked in joints (or 'spliffs'), bongs or pipes. It can also be mixed with food and eaten. It is a depressant.

Street Names: Dope, Weed, Wacky-Backy, Hash, Skunk, Pot, Grass.

- Like alcohol, effects can vary depending on your mood and surroundings before you start using it.
- It alters your state of awareness, in other words, gets you stoned.
 - Being stoned can be a different experience for everyone.

- It can make people relaxed, giggly, more chatty and make your senses more aware of sounds and colours.
- It normally increases user's appetites and they get "the munchies".
- After an initial 'high', it can bring on feelings of numbness, drowsiness and de-motivation.
- It can create an unsettling feeling of paranoia, confusion or disorientation. It can have a hallucinatory effect and slows down your body's reaction time.
- It can lead to memory loss and depression, and is linked to mental illnesses like psychosis and schizophrenia.
- It has a reputation as being a 'soft drug' but there's a high concentration of 'THC' in street sold cannabis these days, which makes it far from soft.





Cocaine is a flaky white powder that comes from the cocoa plant and is usually snorted or eaten. It is a stimulant drug.

Street Name:

Coke, Charlie, Dust, Snow, Blow, Powder, Lines, Rock.

- Coke supplies a burst of heightened awareness and sensation of confidence similar to speed and amphetamines.
- It can produce anxiety, paranoia, depression and insomnia when you're coming down.
- It's very, very addictive and can lead to a massive increase in use in order to battle the comedown.
- When using it with alcohol it can create a chemical in your body that increases your risk of a heart attack.



Ecstasy can be a mixture of drugs, but usually refers to the chemical 'MDMA' which is known as a 'hallucinogenic amphetamine'. In pill form, it's usually mixed with other chemicals like speed.

MDMA also comes in pure powder form. It is from the stimulant family of drugs.

REMEMBER: Be sure to carry a bottle of water with you if you have taken 'E'. But be careful not to overdo it.



- Ecstasy pills take a while to kick in (30-45mins) and then create a sensation of euphoria, heightened senses, might make your limbs feel heavy or light, might make you feel love for the world and everything around you.
- When you take a pill it can make you feel nervous and paranoid. Some people have had bad experiences because of the poor quality of the pill.
- The E comedown is notorious for nasty feelings of depression, isolation and anxiety for days after the nice effects wear off.
- Long-term consequences of "E" use are fiercely debated. Many people have reported memory loss, severe sleep problems and sustained depression.





Speed, or amphetamine, is a synthetic chemical stimulant that comes in the form of white, or off-white powder or small 'crystals'. It's snorted, diluted in liquid and drunk, or injected into the bloodstream.

Street Name: Wizz, Crank, Juice, Poison, Skud.

- Speed does what its name suggests: it speeds everything up your system, your perception, giving the body a rapid, prolonged sense of energy.
- It can make you irritable, nervous, paranoid and confused.
- Similar to E, it can produce a nasty comedown when it wears off, leading to anxiety, depression and muscular pain.
- Long term use can lead to problems with memory and concentration and possibly psychosis.





LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide) is a hallucinatory drug dabbed on little edible 'tabs' of paper, often with a picture or symbol on one side.

Street Name: Acid, Blotter, Cid, Doses, Trips.

- LSD can produce a powerful, very unpredictable 'trip'. Depending on mood, strength of the drug and the person taking it, it's hard to gauge the exact effect.
- Objects, movement, vision and hearing are distorted and hallucinations are pretty common.
- LSD is infamous for bad trips, in which the user feels dizzy, disoriented, trapped, fearful and paranoid.

- Panic attacks from a bad trip can last for weeks or months after the event.
- Sense of self and personality might be altered by the experience.
- Judgement is severely impaired and people can become seriously irrational to the point of doing things that put themselves and people around them in danger.
- Unsettling 'Flashbacks' of the trip can occur for years after taking it.
- LSD can also act as a trigger to underlying mental health problems.







Heroin is a controlled substance and normally bought on the street illegally. It comes from the opiate (painkiller) family and is very addictive. It can be injected, smoked or sniffed.

Street Names: Smack, Skag, H, Brown, Gear, Tack, Yack, Junk.

- Heroin is very quickly absorbed into the blood stream. It can have nearly an immediate hit which gives a rush of wellbeing and euphoria.
- After the first rush which lasts for a couple of minutes, the effects of heroin can last 3-6 hours, creating a feeling of relaxation and drowsiness as it slows down brain functions and the body's reactions.

- Heroin is extremely dangerous as both the brain and the body become addicted to it. People addicted to heroin become dependant on it needing regular hits about every 8 hours just to feel ok.
- As people become more tolerant of it they need more and more to get the same hit.
- As it slows down the functions of the body, too much heroin can cause the body to shut down.
- As heroin creates a very strong addiction it can lead to mental health problems and it can take some time to become mentally free of heroin even when you have broken the physical addiction.

The LowDown

Tranquillisers are tablets and capsules prescribed by doctors for legitimate anxiety, depression and sleeping problems. However, people have been known to use them in a non-prescribed way, mixing them with alcohol and other types of drugs to alter and enhance their highs. These drugs act as depressants and are very addictive.

Types: Barbiturates and Benzodiazepines.

Street Names: Sleepers, Downers, Benzos, Nerve Pills, Tranks.

- Tranquillisers relieve anxiety and tension in small doses, and lead to drowsiness in larger doses, the effects of which might last 3-6 hours.
- Each type of tranquilliser has slightly different effects, especially when used in combination with other drugs.
- Tolerance to tranquillisers can come quickly which means that you need to up the dosage in order to feel the same effects. This can potentially lead to dependence.
- Irritability, nausea, insomnia and convulsions are all potential side effects when withdrawing from ongoing use.





- Mixing these downers with other drugs and alcohol is a dangerous move.
- Stopping use of Benzodiapines ('Benzos') suddenly after regular use has been known to lead to dangerous seizures.
- Aggressive behaviour, memory loss, depression and loss of physical co-ordination are associated with long term use of these drugs.

Magic mushrooms is a name given to two different varieties of mushrooms that grow wild and are a hallucinogenic - meaning they cause sights and sounds to change or seem different then they actually are. They can be eaten raw, cooked, dried or brewed in a tea. In the last few years there was some confusion about whether they were illegal, however the law is now clear - they are a controlled substance, which means it is illegal to possess, produce or supply them.

Street Name: Shrooms, Mushies, Liberty Caps

The DownLow...

- It can take between 20 min to an hour for the effects to kick in. The first signs are a sense of euphoria and expectation, along with a tingling body feeling.

- The trip then becomes more intense and it will begin to change what you hear and see. Hallucinations can happen, especially if you take a lot.
- It's also common to have stomach pains, feel sick and possibly vomit.
- Trips can last between 4-9 hours and is similar in effect to LSD.
- Just like LSD people can have bad trips and the hallucinogenic effect can cause people to do dangerous things they wouldn't normally try.
- As with all drugs how you are feeling before taking them will affect the trip. If you have any underlying problems with your mental health it can make things complicated. It can cause extreme emotional reactions even in people who don't have mental health issues and you can get flashbacks from them.





Choosing not to take drugs or alcohol is the best way to stay healthy and well. This is not an easy decision especially when they are so freely available and you may feel under pressure or curious to take them. If you decide that you don't want to take drugs for whatever reason, other people should respect that.

If you are in a situation where people are encouraging you to try alcohol or drugs with them and you don't want to, standing your ground and saying 'I just don't want to' is the best option. If you want more advice on saying no to drugs when under peer pressure see the websites listed under 'Getting Information'.

People take drugs and alcohol for various reasons. Curiosity, pressure, depression, boredom, stress...

But when used too regularly, they can actually increase depression and stress and make things a lot worse down the track.

Let's make this very clear: if you want to keep your head in check, then drugs and booze can be a risky move.

Most of the time, people take alcohol and drugs when they're out with friends, at a party, usually in a spur of the moment situation. At these moments thinking sensibly won't be on your mind. But there are some simple things you can do to help reduce the chances of you having a really bad time, being hurt or hurting someone else and doing serious damage to your body and mind.

REMEMBER the effect drugs or alcohol might have on you is unknown and for this reason they are potentially very dangerous.

7 Tips to Minding Yourself When Drinking or Using Drug

- If you are going to drink alcohol or take drugs make sure that you are in a safe place with people you know and don't put yourself in a risky situation.
- If you do take drugs or alcohol try not to get completely wasted to the point that you don't know what you are doing or can't make good choices. This will ensure that you and your friends stay safe.
- Set limits for yourself, and stick to them. Don't let other people pressure you into drinking or taking more than you want. Remember it might take a while for the alcohol or drugs to kick in, but taking more and more until it hits will make you very sick very suddenly and will ruin your night.

- 4 Don't mix different drugs including street drugs, alcohol and prescription drugs. Bad move. You're messing with all sorts of different chemicals, the effects of which are very unpredictable.
- 5. Always make sure that someone else knows what you've taken in case you get sick.
- b. Drugs bought on the street are rarely pure and often mixed with nasty crap and other chemicals. Again there are a lot of unknowns with them. Not healthy and very risky.
- 7. When drinking alcohol try to drink slowly shots and alcopops are a bad idea and be aware of how much you are drinking. Staying busy like dancing or playing games can help you pace out your drinks better.
- REMEMBER if you do get up to dance or have a game of pool don't leave your drink sitting unattended or with someone you don't trust.



Are alcohol or drug*r* becoming a problem for you?

If you are drinking alcohol or using drugs there is a danger of becoming addicted. Things to watch out for which might help you spot if you have a problem that you need to get help for are:

- Neglecting school / work.
- Getting into hassles at school / work / home.
- Having more arguments with your family or friends.
- Feeling down or out of sorts a few days after you've been drunk or high.

- Feeling hungover or coming down the next day on a regular basis especially if you need more alcohol or drugs to feel OK again.
- Thinking about drinking / smoking / using drugs a lot during the day.
- Feeling edgy.
- Drinking more alcohol or using more drugs than intended.
- Finding that you need to drink more alcohol or use more drugs to get the same effect.

Getting Information

There are lots of websites and leaflets available with information about drugs and alcohol. This is just a small selection of websites where you can get more information and maybe find an answer to a question you have about drugs and alcohol.

www.headstrong.ie

www.SpunOut.ie

www.youthhealth.ie

www.thesite.org

www.reachout.com.au

www.alcoholireland.ie

You can also text the name of the drug you want information on to **51900** to receive a text with information on that drug.



Finding Jupport

If you have a concern about your own drinking or drug use or you are worried about someone else and want some advice, talking to your local youth service/project, GP, counsellor, local health clinic or local community drugs team is the best place to start. Not all these services will be available in every area so to find out what services might be available in your area go to www.drugs.ie.

This website has information on drugs and alcohol and provides information on services that are available to support you in each county in Ireland.



Alternatively you can call the Drugs Helpline which is a free and confidential service. Call 1800 459 459 for support and information.

Headstrong wish to acknowledge that information adapted from spunout.ie, thesource.ie and reachout.com has been used to develop this booklet.





QUICH REFERENCE

Cannabis: Dope, Weed, Wacky-Backy, Hash,

Skunk, Pot, Grass.

Cocaine: Coke, Charlie, Dust, Snow, Blow,

Powder, Lines, Rock.

Ecstasy: E, XTC, Disco Biscuits, Love Doves.

Speed: Wizz, Crank, Juice, Poison, Skud.

LSD: Acid, Blotter, Cid, Doses, Trips.

Heroin: Smack, Skag, H, Brown, Gear, Tack,

Yack, Junk.

Tranquillisers: Sleepers, Downers, Benzos, Nerve Pills,

Tranks.

Magic Mushrooms: Shrooms, Mushies, Liberty Caps.



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