A GUIDE TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE
For Medical Professionals
Health Service Executive South

A Guide To Substance Misuse
For Medical Professionals
(Edition 1.2)

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### Contents

**Section One - Drug Category**

1. Hallucinogens .................................................................................................................. 5
   - Amanita Muscaria (Fly Agaric) .................................................................................. 7
   - Cannabis ...................................................................................................................... 8
   - Ketamine ..................................................................................................................... 10
   - LSD ............................................................................................................................. 12
   - Psilocybe semilanceata (Liberty cap) ....................................................................... 13
2. Opiates .......................................................................................................................... 14
   - Heroin ....................................................................................................................... 16
   - Methadone ............................................................................................................... 17
3. Stimulants ...................................................................................................................... 18
   - General Information on Stimulants ........................................................................ 18
   - Amphetamine Sulphate .......................................................................................... 22
   - Cocaine .................................................................................................................... 25
   - Crack Cocaine ......................................................................................................... 26
   - Dextedrine ................................................................................................................ 27
   - Khat (Catha Edulis) .................................................................................................. 28
   - Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth) .......................................................................... 29
   - Methamphetamine (Methedrine) ............................................................................. 31
   - Ecstasy ...................................................................................................................... 32
4. Volatile Substances ........................................................................................................ 35
   - Adhesives and Glues ............................................................................................... 36
   - Aerosols .................................................................................................................... 37
   - Cleaning Agents ....................................................................................................... 38
   - Petrol, lighter fuel and other products ..................................................................... 39
   - Poppers ..................................................................................................................... 40
   - Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome (SSDS) ............................................................... 42
5. Miscellaneous Substances ............................................................................................ 43
   - Anabolic Steroids ..................................................................................................... 43
   - BZP ........................................................................................................................... 44
   - GHB ........................................................................................................................... 45
   - Kratom ...................................................................................................................... 46
   - Over the counter medications ................................................................................... 47
   - Sally D ...................................................................................................................... 48
   - Miscellaneous ........................................................................................................ 49
6. Barbiturates ................................................................................................................... 50
7. Benzodiazepines .......................................................................................................... 52
8. Depressants .................................................................................................................. 54
   - Alcohol .................................................................................................................... 54
Section Two - Recognising Drug Use

1. Physical Signs ................................................................................................................................. 58
2. Behavioural Signs .............................................................................................................................. 58
3. Possible signs of alcohol and drug misuse in the workplace ................................................................. 58
4. Recognising Drug Use .......................................................................................................................... 59
5. Risk factor analysis ............................................................................................................................. 59
6. How long do drugs stay in your system? ............................................................................................. 59

Section Three - Facts about drugs

1. Definition of a drug ............................................................................................................................... 62
2. What are drugs? .................................................................................................................................... 62
3. Legal Drug Use ...................................................................................................................................... 62
4. So how did drugs become street drugs? ............................................................................................... 62
5. How long have drugs been around? ...................................................................................................... 63
6. Why do people take drugs? .................................................................................................................. 63
7. So, what's the problem? ...................................................................................................................... 64
8. The Epidemiological Triangle .............................................................................................................. 64
9. Stages of Drug Use .............................................................................................................................. 65
10. Factors Associated with illicit drug use .............................................................................................. 66
11. Reasons for illicit drug use .................................................................................................................. 67
12. Correlates of drug use .......................................................................................................................... 69
13. Misuse of Drugs Psychosocial & environmental influences .............................................................. 70
14. How is social and community harm determined? .............................................................................. 71

Section Four - Drug Dangers

1. Injection ................................................................................................................................................ 73
   Overdoing It ....................................................................................................................................... 73
   Doubling Up ....................................................................................................................................... 73
   Individual Differences ......................................................................................................................... 74
   Adulteration and Mistaken Identity ..................................................................................................... 74
   Pregnancy ........................................................................................................................................... 74
2. The way drugs are taken ....................................................................................................................... 74
3. Dependence ........................................................................................................................................ 75
4. Detoxification ....................................................................................................................................... 75
5. Drug Effects ......................................................................................................................................... 76

Section Five - Drugs and the Law

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 78
2. Key Statutes and their provisions ......................................................................................................... 78

Section Six - The Jargon

1. The Jargon ............................................................................................................................................ 86
2. Addiction Services Managers Group ..................................................................................................... 94
3. Notes .................................................................................................................................................... 96
Introduction

During 2006 discussions between HSE South and General Practitioners highlighted the need for increased information and awareness around the use of illicit drugs. This issue was brought to the attention of the HSE South Regional Training and Accreditation Committee and in October 2006 they recommended that a poster around the use of cocaine should, be designed and disseminated to all the General Practitioners in the South Eastern Health Service Executive.

The availability of this poster, and the continuing dialogue with medical practitioners, highlighted the need for a practical and easy to read guide for the broad range of issues around substance abuse and drug related issues. This, in turn, led to the concept of designing a Medical Practitioners Manual on Substance Misuse and Drug Related Issues.

The manual, of which this is the first edition, is intended for all General Practitioners and medical professionals in the Southern Health Service Executive region. The manual’s target is to highlight issues relating to alcohol and drug related concerns in an easily accessible quick reference manner.

This manual was designed in such a way as to include new information as it comes to hand and Substance Misuse Units in HSE South will feed in new information on an annual basis in order to update the pack. This will ensure that the Manual will remain relevant and up to date.

The Drug Education Officer in South Tipperary led on the design of the template of this manual and the Drug Education Officers in the South East were consulted and involved in the process throughout. This information is taken and referenced from a number of different sources and our thanks go to all who gave input and helped with this publication.

Manual Aim
This manual was designed in order to facilitate detailed information on Substance Misuse in the Southern Region.

The Objective of this manual is:

- To provide an easy access quick reference
- Substance Misuse related manual for all Medical Practitioners in the Southern Health Service Region
- To include relevant up to date drugs facts and information
- To provide a Directory of Services to all relevant services
- To provide a Mapping of Services relevant for all Medical Practitioners
- To provide an appropriate referral system for potential clients across the Southern region
- To create a system that can be added to over the following years as information around drugs changes.

We would like to thank and acknowledge those who reviewed this manual at different stages of its inception. They include:

Dr. Des Corrigan, Trinity College
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South East Training & Accreditation Group
Ms. Cecily Roache, Pharmacist
Dr. Martin Rouse, Western Road Medical Centre, Clonmel.
HSE Solicitor
Health Promotion, N.I.

We would also like to give a special thanks to Eddie Matthews for his kind sponsorship of this project.

Tony Barden - Regional Drug Coordinator HSE South
Section One

Drug Category

- Hallucinogens
- Opiates
- Stimulants
- Volatile Substances
- Miscellaneous Substances
- Barbiturates
- Benzodiazepines
- Depressants
**Hallucinogens**

General information on Hallucinogens

This section includes information on LSD and other synthetic hallucinogens, hallucinogenic mushrooms and cannabis. The hallucinogenic amphetamines are included under stimulants, although they have both hallucinogenic and stimulant properties.

**Drugs include:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRUG NAME</th>
<th>STREET NAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amanita muscaria (Fly agaric)</td>
<td>Magic mushrooms, M&amp;Ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannabis</td>
<td>Pot, dope, blow, skunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lysergic acid diethylamide</td>
<td>LSD, Acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketamine</td>
<td>Special K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phencyclidine</td>
<td>PCP, Angel dust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psilocybe semilanceata</td>
<td>Liberty cap, Magic mushrooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Hallucinogens**

**Street Use**
Cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug. Its use tends to be recreational in nature. Similarly, the use of LSD and magic mushrooms is normally associated with recreational use. Liberty Cap grows in the autumn, therefore its use tends to be seasonal, although the dried fungus can be stored.

**Drug Effect**
Heightened appreciation of sensory experiences, perceptual distortions, feelings of disassociation and elevation of mood.

**Dependency**
Minimal risk of physical dependence. All carry risk of psychological dependency.

**Long-term Use**
Apart from those linked to smoking (cannabis), there are no known physical dangers attributed to long-term use. Adverse psychological reactions are possible with LSD, PCP and liberty cap. In some cases, they can be severe and long-lasting. Mushroom poisoning is also possible.

**Overdose Risk**
Overdose risk is small. However, with ketamine, inhalation of vomit may be a risk when doses sufficient to induce anaesthesia are taken.

---

*Cannabis Sativa (Herbal form of Cannabis)*

*LSD is often added to absorbent paper, such as blotter paper, and divided into small decorated squares, with each square representing one dose.*
**Hallucinogens**

**Amanita Muscaria (Fly agaric)**

**Street Name**
Magic mushrooms

**Drug Effect**
Hallucinogen

**Description**
A red mushroom, about 10-12cm high, with white spots. The psycho-active drugs are muscarine, atropine and bufotenine.

**Method of Use**
Usually cooked and eaten or boiled in water to make a “tea”. Mushrooms can also be dried for storage.

**Dependency**
No

**Withdrawal**
Effects which include sweating, nausea, reduced heart rate and hallucinations begin within 30-40 minutes and usually last between four and eight hours. Aggressive mood changes have also been reported.

**Long-term Use**
Little is known about the long-term use of fly agaric.

**Overdose Risk**
Fly agaric mushrooms are very toxic. Heart failure is the most common cause of death.
Hallucinogens

Cannabis (Tetra-hydrocannabinol)

Street Name
Blow, draw, pot, dope, grass, black, hash

Drug Effect
Naturally occurring hallucinogen from the plant cannabis sativa

Street Form
Cannabis resin/hashish - most commonly used form is small blocks/lumps of brown resinous material. Marijuana/herbal cannabis - preparation resembles dried grass or leaves. Cannabis oil - strongest preparation, brown to black coloured thick oil.

Method of Use
Smoked, eaten

Dependency
Yes (probably psychological)

Withdrawal
If smoked, effects last for up to three hours. If eaten, the drug is absorbed more slowly and effects may last for 24 hours. No physical withdrawal symptoms reported but heavy users may experience restlessness and depression.

Long-term Use
Respiratory problems associated with smoking. Psychological disturbance with heavy use (rare).

Overdose Risk
Very unlikely, although vomiting is common when taken for the first time.
**Cannabis (Tetra-hydrocannabinol)**

Cannabis can have the effect of a depressant or mild hallucinogen, depending on the amount taken and situational factors.

**Cannabis short-term effects**

The immediate effects of low doses may include:
- tendency to laugh easily;
- becoming talkative;
- Loss of concentration
- Impaired balance
- Slower reflexes
- Increased appetite
- Increased heart rate
- Feeling of wellbeing
- Loss of inhibitions
- more relaxed behaviour; reddening of eyes; dry mouth; hunger.

If the drug is smoked, it produces a distinctive sweet smell.

**Higher doses:**
- Confusion and anxiety
- Restlessness
- Detachment from reality
- Hallucinations
- Paranoia
- Panic attacks

**Cannabis can also affect:**
- Short-term memory
- Logical thinking
- Motor skills (movement skills)
- Ability to perform complex tasks

These symptoms usually disappear when the effects of cannabis wear off.
Hallucinogens

Ketamine

Street Name
K, special K

Drug Effect
An anaesthetic with analgesic (pain killing) and hallucinogenic properties.

Brand Name
Ketalar (Parke-Davis)

Street Form
Clear liquid, White powder

Therapeutic Use
Used as an anaesthetic, most commonly in emergency surgery.

Method of use
By mouth, sniffing, smoking or by injection.

Dependency
Yes (psychological)

Withdrawal
Ketamine takes between 30 seconds and 20 minutes to take effect, depending on how it is administered. Drug effects, which include a cocaine-like “rush”, loss of muscular coordination and LSD-like hallucinations, last between one to three hours but for considerably shorter periods among heavy users. There are no physical withdrawal symptoms but heavy users report a strong psychological dependence.

Long-term Use
Information on the long-term use of ketamine is limited. LSD-like “flashbacks” have been reported, together with loss of appetite and weight loss. There may also be a potential for the development of psychiatric problems following heavy use.

Overdose Risk
Few deaths have been reported. However, as with any anaesthetic, inhalation of vomit (after eating) is a serious risk if doses sufficient to induce anaesthesia are taken.
What is ketamine?

Ketamine is a “dissociative anaesthetic” which means it detaches the mind from the body. It’s used as a Horse Tranquillizer and is related to the veterinary anaesthetic PCP, also known as angel dust.

The Ketamine Effect

There’s an initial rush, similar to the cocaine rush, that may happen within 30 seconds if the drug is injected, or 20-30 minutes if swallowed. Then it’s rapidly downhill for about the next three hours. The body is numb and paralysed. There may be sickness and vomiting. Co-ordination goes and the simplest tasks are impossible. There’s feeling of being weightless and of being separated from the body. Terrifying hallucinations can occur; limbs feel as though they’re growing and shrinking; there’s tunnel vision and faces look grossly distorted. The hallucinations seem as if they’ll never stop and there’s a feeling of being close to death.

• Ketamine is not a dance drug and taking it in a club is a bad idea.
• The noisy, disorientating environment will worsen the bad effects of ketamine.
• It should never be taken on the spur of the moment.
• Ketamine should not be mixed with any other drugs.
• Ketamine and speed, ketamine and acid and ketamine and alcohol are all recipes for disaster.

Ketamine and Ecstasy

Be aware. Ketamine is one of the drugs most often “cut” with MDMA in ecstasy pills. People sometimes say they’ve had a “smacky” E, meaning it made them feel sedated, instead of euphoric and energetic. Worse still, ketamine pills are sometimes sold as ecstasy so be careful. Ketamine has anything but the effect of the E, and can be terrifying for someone who isn’t prepared for it.
Hallucinogens

LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide)

Street Name
Acid, acid-tabs, trips, trade names e.g.: Strawberries

Drug Effect
Hallucinogen

Street form
Considerable local variation: paper squares, microdots, tablets

Method of Use
By mouth

Dependency
No evidence of physical dependency

Withdrawal
Trips begin up to one hour after dose and last for two to 12 hours depending on strength. Tolerance develops quickly after 3-4 days so that further doses are ineffective. No physical/psychological withdrawal symptoms reported.

Long-term Use
Flashbacks (re-experiencing previous trip) common. Temporary psychological disturbance with heavy use.

Overdose risk
Only one recorded overdose death worldwide, although suicides and accidental deaths also reported.

Effects can vary depending on the nature of the experience. They include:
• relaxed behaviour & agitated behaviour.
• dilation of pupils & uncoordinated movements.
Hallucinogens

Psilocybe semilanceata (Liberty cap)

Street Name
Magic mushrooms, mushies

Drug Effect
Hallucinogen. The mushroom effect is described as a ‘trip’ and may last up to 4-6 hours. It can be a powerful experience which may produce a distortion of normal perception similar to an LSD effect.

Description
Light brown mushroom about 6-8cm high containing psilocybin.

Method of Use
Usually cooked and eaten or boiled in water to make a “tea”. Mushrooms can also be dried for storage.

Dependency
No

Withdrawal
Effects which include euphoria and hallucinations begin within 20-40 minutes and usually last between four and eight hours. Sleep often follows use. No withdrawal symptoms have been noted.

Long-term Use
Psilocybin can cause impaired cognitive functioning and poor performance on attention tests. However, no adverse long-term effects have been reported.

Overdose Risk
Liberty caps are not very toxic and so the overdose risk is low. Amounts of mushrooms used vary from one or two mushrooms to 20 or more. However, there is a risk of mistakingly taking a more poisonous mushroom or fungus.
**Opiates**

General information on Opiates
Opiates can be divided into two groups: the naturally occurring opiates, like heroin and morphine, which are derived from the opium poppy, and the synthetic opiates like methadone and dipipanone.

**Drugs include:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRUG NAME</th>
<th>BRAND/COMMON NAME</th>
<th>STREET NAME</th>
<th>THERAPEUTIC DOSE RANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Codeine</td>
<td>Actifed, Phensedyl, Codeine, Linctus Codis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buprenorphine</td>
<td>Temgesic</td>
<td>Tems</td>
<td>0.6-1.6mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dextropropoxyphene</td>
<td>Distalgesic Co-proximol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dextromoramide</td>
<td>Palfium</td>
<td>Palf, peach</td>
<td>5-10mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamorphine</td>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>Smack, H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dihydrocodeine</td>
<td>DF118</td>
<td>DFs, diffs</td>
<td>120-180mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipipanone</td>
<td>Diconal</td>
<td>Dikies</td>
<td>30mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methadone</td>
<td>Physeptone</td>
<td>Meth, phy</td>
<td>15-40mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphine</td>
<td>MST Continus, Kaolin and Morphine Cyclimorph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>Gees Linctus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nubain</td>
<td>Nalbuphine hydrochloride</td>
<td>1 ml vial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opiates

Street Use
Opiates can be smoked, sniffed, inhaled or injected depending on the drug and preparation.

Drug Effect
Opiates are used for their analgesic (painkilling) properties. They also reduce breathing rate, heart rate, hunger and anxiety. These effects, combined with an increase in blood flow to the skin, gives the warm, contented and sometimes euphoric feeling that is often reported. First time users may vomit but this stops with repeated use. At low doses, opiates do not interfere with physical coordination or mental alertness. After high doses, opiates produce a stupor (gauching).

Dependence
Tolerance to opiates develops very quickly and after a few weeks of regular use, doses must be increased to produce the same effect. Dependence takes longer to develop, but after taking opiates regularly for some months, there are physical withdrawal symptoms. The speed with which dependence develops and the severity of withdrawal symptoms experienced depends upon the quantity and type of drug taken, the method of administration and, to some extent, the expectations of the user. Withdrawal usually begins eight to 48 hours after the last dose of drug, peaks after three to five days and then fades after five to 14 days. Withdrawal from opiates can be unpleasant and uncomfortable. Symptoms are similar to a bad bout of flu and include sweating, stomach cramps, muscular pain, running nose and diarrhoea. Most symptoms fade fairly quickly but sleeplessness and feelings of weakness may continue for some months.

Long-term Use
The physical effects of long-term opiate use are not often serious in themselves. Common side effects include constipation, irregular periods (menstrual cycle) and weight loss. However, the use of unsterile equipment and the injecting of adulterated heroin, crushed tablets or the contents of capsules, can lead to more serious problems, including abscesses, vein collapse, loss of limbs, hepatitis B and C and HIV infection.

Overdose Risk
Deaths from opiate overdoses are relatively rare, although the intravenous use of Diconal is particularly dangerous. The risk increases after a period of abstinence or when opiates are mixed with other drugs such as cocaine, barbiturates or alcohol.

Risks in Pregnancy
Many women do not have periods (menstrual cycle) when they are using opiates regularly but as soon as they cut down or stop, their periods return. Many female drug users become pregnant at this time. There is no evidence that opiates cause birth defects although they may possibly increase the risk of miscarriage and still births. However, opiate use should not be stopped suddenly because this also increases the risk of miscarriage or premature labour. Gradual withdrawal over 12 weeks may be advised. Babies born to mothers who continue to use throughout the pregnancy show withdrawal symptoms within three days of birth (possibly longer if the mother has been using methadone). Symptoms include excessive restlessness, shrill crying, sleeplessness, constant sucking, diarrhoea, yawning and sneezing. In severe cases, babies may suffer convulsions which can be fatal.
Opiates - Heroin

Heroin acts as a depressant.

Short-Term Effect
• slowing down of breathing and heart rate
• suppression of cough reflex
• increase in size of certain blood vessels
• itchy skin & runny nose.
• lowering of body temperature
• sweating
• One-to-two minute “rush”
• Warm flushing of the skin
• Dry mouth
• Heavy feeling in arms and legs
• Nausea & Vomiting
• Severe itching
• Drowsiness and confusion for up to six hours
• Slowed heart rate & slowed breathing rate

Heroin’s many physical dangers include:
• Painful Withdrawal that Maintains Addiction
• Restlessness
• Muscle and bone pain
• Muscle spasms
• Insomnia
• Diarrhea and vomiting
• Chills and goose bumps
• Intense anxiety

Cardiovascular Damage
• Endocarditis - Heart infection
• Scarred and/or collapsed veins
• Blood vessels clogged by foreign particles, causing cell death

Infections and Viruses
• Boils and abscesses
• Soft-tissue infections
• HIV/AIDS
• Hepatitis B and C
• Systemic infections (bacteremia or sepsis)

Other Organ Damage and Disease
• Liver disease
• Kidney disease
• Arthritis

Danger During Pregnancy
• Miscarriage, premature delivery, or stillbirth of pregnancies.
• Addicted newborns greater risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (“cot death”)
Opiates - Methadone

Street Name
Meth, phy

Brand name
Pinadone DTF and Physeptone (Calmic)

Drug effect
Painkiller and depressant ("downer").

Description
White scored tablet marked Welcome (5mg)
1ml ampoules (10mg/ml)
Mixture (1mg/1ml)
Linctus

Therapeutic use
Severe pain and opiate dependence

Method of use
By mouth or injecting crushed tablets, linctus or ampoule

Dependency
Yes

Withdrawal
The effects of methadone last up to 24 hours, which is longer than heroin. Withdrawal symptoms are slower to develop but last longer. Flu-like symptoms appear up to two days after last dose, peak after five to six days and fade after 14 days. Sleeplessness may last for longer. It has been suggested that withdrawal is more difficult than from heroin.

Long-term use
Constipation; breathing difficulties; irregular periods (menstrual cycle).
If injected:
- infection risk and circulatory problems
Depresses effects of other opiates.

Overdose risk
Deaths from the use of methadone alone are relatively infrequent. However, the overdose risk increases after a period of abstinence or if methadone is mixed with other drugs such as benzodiazepines or alcohol.
Stimulants

General information on Stimulants

The most commonly used stimulants are amphetamines and cocaine. Cocaine is derived from the leaf of the coca plant (Erythroxylum Coca) and amphetamines are manufactured both legally and illegally. Most recently, the recreational use of Ecstasy has become common, particularly among young people who follow the club scene.

Drugs include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRUG NAME</th>
<th>STREET NAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amphetamine sulphate</td>
<td>Speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine hydrochloride</td>
<td>Cocaine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catha edulis-khat</td>
<td>Khat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dexamphetamine sulphate</td>
<td>Dexedrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methlamphetamine</td>
<td>Methamphetamine/crystal meth/meth/ice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methylene dioxy methamphetamine</td>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stimulants (continued)

Street Use
Stimulants can be swallowed, sniffed or injected. Amphetamine sulphate can also be smoked and cocaine freebase, heated and inhaled. Ecstasy is usually taken by mouth.

Drug Effect
Stimulants increase cerebral activity, causing excitement and euphoria. They also dilate the pupils of the eye, increase heart rate and blood pressure, cause sleeplessness and anorexia (loss of appetite). Cocaine is a powerful local anaesthetic but amphetamines are not. Low to moderate doses of stimulants do not disrupt thinking but users may experience mood swings. High doses, on the other hand, can cause thought disorder and a drug induced psychosis resembling paranoid schizophrenia is not uncommon. Their use may also cause hallucinations and paranoid thinking.

Dependence
Tolerance develops quickly with amphetamines, provoking massive increases in doses. Tolerance to cocaine tends to be much less marked, although tolerance to the euphoric effects of “freebase” has been noted, causing increasing frequency of use. Dependence on stimulants is said to be more psychological than physical although recent evidence suggests possible long-term changes to the nervous system. Withdrawal is characterised by hunger, fatigue, periods of fitful sleep, increase in dreaming and depression. In some individuals, depression can be prolonged and severe.

Long-term Use
Prolonged use of stimulants can lead to weight loss, insomnia, exhaustion and mental confusion, severe depression and drug-induced psychosis (usually resolved after drug taking is stopped).

Overdose Risk
Death from drug overdoses is more common with cocaine than with amphetamines and often results from respiratory failure. Individuals with high blood pressure or a heart condition are at risk when using stimulants because extra stress is placed on the cardio-vascular system.

Risks in Pregnancy
Stimulants can cause congenital abnormalities, miscarriage, premature labour and smaller than average babies. Drug use should be stopped immediately, without any drug substitution, because of risk to the baby. Babies born to mothers who continue to take stimulants during pregnancy show a withdrawal syndrome. Withdrawal among newborn babies is characterised by shrill crying, irritability and repeated sneezing.
Stimulants (continued)

Stimulant drugs
(amphetamines, butyl nitrite, cocaine)

These Drugs can cause:

- increased pulse rate.
- increased blood pressure.
- agitation.
- lack of coherent speech or talkativeness.
- dilated pupils.
- loss of appetite.
- damage to nasal passages (tendency to sniff).
- increased tendency to go to the toilet.
- mouth ulcers; fatigue after use.

Short-Term Effects of Cocaine Use
- Talkativeness and sociability.
- Extreme mental alertness.
- Nervousness and jumpiness.
- Anxiety, especially about being caught using.
- Irritability.
- Paranoia.
- Diminished decision-making ability.
- Insomnia.
- Tremors and dizziness.
- Muscle twitches and spasms.
- Lost self-control.
- Violent behaviour.
- Dry mouth.
- Constricted blood vessels.
- Dilated pupils.
- Decreased appetite.
- Abdominal pain and nausea.
- Blurred vision.
- Fever.
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure.
- Impotence combined with excessive interest in sex.

Long-Term Effects of Cocaine Use
There is no safe way to use cocaine! The health risks become much worse when combined with alcohol or other drugs. Alcohol and cocaine combined produce cocaethylene, which intensifies cocaine’s effects and may increase the risk of sudden death. Cocaine’s many dangers include:
Neurological Effects
- Headaches.
- Convulsions.
- Seizures.
- Coma.

Heart Disease
- Altered heart rhythm.
- Chest pain.
- Very high or very low blood pressure.
- Heart attack.
- Endocarditis – Heart infection.
- Stroke.
- Sudden death.

Lung Damage and Disease
- Difficulty breathing.
- Chronic bronchitis.
- Ruptured lung structures.
- Collapsed lung.
- Respiratory failure.

Psychological Damage
- Irritability and mood disturbances.
- Auditory hallucinations (imaginary sounds that seem real).
- Formication - The sensation that insects are crawling under the skin.

Reproductive System Damage
- Sexual dysfunction in both males and females.
- Menstrual cycle disturbances.
- Infertility in both males and females.

Danger During Pregnancy
- Miscarriage, premature delivery, or stillbirth of pregnancies.
- Addicted new borns.
- Low birth weight, smaller head size, and shorter length in newborns.
- Deformities in newborns of addicted mothers or addicted fathers.

Other Damage
- Burns in mouth and on hands from smoking.
- “Tracks” - puncture marks on arms or wherever injections are made.
- Infections and sores associated with injection tracks.
- Incontinence (inability to control urination and/or bowel movements).
- Allergic reactions to cocaine or the additives in street drugs.
- Brain infections - both bacterial and fungal, sometimes leading to abscesses.
- Weight loss and malnourishment due to decreased appetite for food.
- Gangrene (rot) of bowels and other body parts from lack of blood flow.
- More risk-taking behaviour, including unsafe sex.
- Increased risk of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis, either from unsafe sex or using infected needles.
Stimulants

Amphetamine Sulphate

Street Name
Sulphate, sulph, whizz, speed, billy

Drug Effect
Strong stimulant ("upper")

Street form
White/yellow crystalline powder, usually sold in "wraps"

Method of Use
Eaten, sniffed or injected

Dependency
Yes (mainly psychological)

Withdrawal
Tolerance to amphetamine sulphate develops rapidly and users can increase dose up to 50-fold. Effects of amphetamine sulphate last for three to four hours. Withdrawal from this drug is divided into two phases. The immediate “crash” or rebound lasts two to three weeks and is characterised by hunger, extreme fatigue and long periods of disturbed sleep. In the second phase, heavy users become irritable and depressed (sometimes severely). The second phase can last weeks and sometimes months.

Long-term Use
Excessive restlessness and insomnia; weight loss; amphetamine psychosis (hallucinations and paranoid thinking). If injected: infection risk circulatory problems.

Overdose risk
Death from overdose is possible with large doses, but rare. Overdose risk increases if amphetamine is mixed with drugs such as heroin or depressants like barbiturates or alcohol.
Amphetamines

Amphetamines are nicknamed “speed” or “uppers” because of the burst of energy they provide. Abusers do not feel the need to sleep or eat when they are using. Some users also experience euphoria, a sense of well-being, and self-confidence. Users are usually talkative, and may be aggressive and paranoid, even at an early stage of use. The desirable effects of amphetamines are not without a price. Users shortly build tolerance and dependence – addiction. Soon they need amphetamines to get through an ordinary day. In the meantime, the drugs do serious psychological and physical damage.

Short-term Effects
Amphetamines can be extremely dangerous or fatal from the first use. Users may die from burst blood vessels in the brain, heart failure, or super-elevated body temperature. Common short-term effects include:
- Dry mouth and/or Headache.
- Dilated pupils.
- Insomnia.
- Dry, itchy skin.
- Acne, sores.
- Dizziness and blurry vision.
- Loss of coordination.
- Uncontrollable movements (twitching, jerking, tremors, etc.)
- Fever, flushing, and sweating.
- Diarrhoea or constipation.
- Numbness.
- Impaired speech.
- Increased heart rate.
- Rapid breathing rate.

Overdose
Amphetamine overdose is fairly common, which is probably due to abusers’ ever increasing need for more and more of the drug (tolerance.) Abusers try to overcome their tolerance by escalating their use, they overdo it, and they overdose. Amphetamine overdose is often fatal. Symptoms include:
- Chills, fever, and sweating.
- Muscle spasms, including severely exaggerated arching of the back.
- Convulsions.
- Lack of urine output.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Dilated pupils and blurred vision.
- Blue lips and fingernails.
- Nausea and/or vomiting.
- Elevated blood pressure, followed by a dramatic drop in blood pressure.
- Irregular heartbeat.
- Chest pain.
- Nervousness, irritability.
- Restlessness and/or Aggressive behaviour.
- Coma.
Amphetamines (continued)

Long-term Effects
Amphetamines cause a wide variety of potentially fatal damage to users’ mental and physical health. One of the most troubling effects of amphetamine abuse is the addiction itself, which can be life-altering. Withdrawal causes painful side effects as well.

Addiction
- Amphetamine psychosis (see below)
- Craving
- Tolerance dependence

Withdrawal
- Craving
- Exhaustion
- Depression
- Mental confusion
- Restlessness and insomnia
- Deep and disturbed sleep lasting up to 48 hours
- Extreme hunger
- Psychosis
- Intense anxiety

Other serious, long-term damage caused by amphetamine abuse includes:
- Gastrointestinal/nutritional damage
- Malnutrition
- Ulcers
- Unwanted weight loss
- Heart disease, rapid heart rate, dangerously high blood pressure
- Cardiomyopathy (enlarged and/or weakened heart), heart attack
- Neurological damage: permanent brain damage, disturbed thought processes, speech difficulties, confusion, memory loss
- Psychological damage: hallucinations, deep depression, hypochondria (the false belief that one is physically ill), delusions of power or fame, antisocial behaviour, stereotypic behaviours (odd repetitive movements or habits)
- Psychosis: paranoia, bizarre and violent behaviour
- Danger to newborns of women who use during pregnancy (addiction and withdrawal, cardiac defects, cleft palate, other physical abnormalities
- Developmental delays (neurological damage not detectable at birth)
- Other damage: liver damage, impotence
**Stimulants**

**Cocaine hydrochloride**
*(cocaine/cocaine freebase)*

**Street Name**
Coke, snow, crack, freebase, rock

**Drug Effect**
Strong stimulant (“upper”), local anaesthetic

**Description**
Cocaine - white powder
Cocaine freebase - small white chips

**Therapeutic use**
As local anaesthetic for eyes, ears and nose (rarely used)

**Method of use**
Cocaine hydrochloride - sniffed/injected, rubbed on mucus membrane, eaten, anecdotal evidence of cocaine being placed under eyelids, and administered through anal passage.
Cocaine freebase - heated and inhaled

**Dependency**
Yes (mainly psychological)

**Withdrawal**
Effects of cocaine last for 15 to 30 minutes. Effects of freebase/crack last for only five to ten minutes. No physical withdrawal symptoms but after the “high”, users experience a “crash” or rebound dysphoria when they feel extremely tired and depressed.

**Long-term use**
Excessive restlessness and insomnia; weight loss; increase in blood pressure; paranoid psychosis. If sniffed: damage to nasal membrane, damage to septum between nostrils.
If injected: circulatory problems and/or infection risk.
If inhaled: respiratory problems and lung damage.

**Overdose risk**
High doses can result in an increase in body temperature, extreme agitation, convulsions and respiratory arrest. Overdose risk increases if cocaine is mixed with other drugs such as heroin or depressants like barbiturates and alcohol.

Recent anecdotal information suggests that ‘synthetic’ home made cocaine is being circulated. Nasal apparatus such as rolled up bank notes and straws can spread viral infections, e.g. Hepatitis.
**Stimulants**

**Crack Cocaine**

What does it look like? How is crack abused?
Crack typically is available as rocks. Crack rocks are white (or off-white) and vary in size and shape. Crack is nearly always smoked. Smoking crack cocaine delivers large quantities of the drug to the lungs, producing an immediate and intense euphoric effect.

What is crack cocaine? How is it produced?
Crack cocaine is a highly addictive and powerful stimulant that is derived from powdered cocaine using a simple conversion process. Crack emerged as a drug of abuse in the mid-1980s. It is abused because it produces an immediate high and because it is easy and inexpensive to produce—rendering it readily available and affordable. Crack is produced by dissolving powdered cocaine in a mixture of water and ammonia or sodium bicarbonate (baking soda). The mixture is boiled until a solid substance forms. The solid is removed from the liquid, dried, and then broken into the chunks (rocks) that are sold as crack cocaine.

What are the risks?
Cocaine, in any form, is a powerful, psychologically addictive drug, and addiction seems to develop more quickly when the drug is smoked—as crack is—than snorted—as powdered cocaine typically is. In addition to the usual risks associated with cocaine use (constricted blood vessels; increased temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure; and risk of cardiac arrest and seizure), crack users may experience acute respiratory problems, including coughing, shortness of breath, and lung trauma and bleeding. Crack cocaine smoking also can cause aggressive and paranoid behaviour.
Stimulants

Dexamphetamine sulphate (Dexedrine)

Street name
Dexies

Brand name
Dexedrine (Evans)

Drug effect
Strong stimulant ("upper")

Description
White scored tablet (5mg) marked DB5

Therapeutic use
Narcolepsy (uncontrolled sleeping) and hyperactivity in children

Method of use
By mouth or injected

Dependency
Yes (mainly psychological)

Withdrawal
Tolerance to Dexedrine develops rapidly and users can use up to 50 times the therapeutic dose. Effects last for three to four hours. Withdrawal is divided into two phases. The immediate "crash" or rebound lasts for two to three weeks and is characterised by hunger, extreme fatigue and long periods of fitful sleep. In the second phase, heavy users become irritable and depressed (sometimes severely). The second phase can last weeks and sometimes months.

Long-term use
Excessive restlessness and insomnia; weight loss; psychosis (hallucinations and paranoid thinking).
If injected:
• circulatory problems
• infection risk

Overdose risk
Death from overdose is possible with large doses, but rare. Overdose risk increases if Dexedrine is mixed with other depressant drugs such as opiates, barbiturates or alcohol.
**Stimulants**

*Catha edulis-khat*  
*(contains cathinone and cathine)*

**Street name**  
Khat, chat, qat, quaadka

**Drug effect**  
Khat is a mild stimulant. Users often report a calming effect.

**Description**  
Green leafy plant cultivated throughout Africa.

**Therapeutic use**  
Khat is used socially in many African countries in much the same way as coffee is used in Western culture.

**Method of use**  
Chewing leaves or drinking infusion of leaves (like tea). Use has been linked in Scotland to the dance/rave scene.

**Dependency**  
There is no record of dependency, though it would be reasonable to expect similar psychological dependency exhibited by other stimulant users.

**Withdrawal**  
There is no recorded withdrawal syndrome. It would be reasonable to expect listlessness and tiredness experienced by other stimulant users.

**Long-term use**  
Khat is normally chewed and this can cause medical problems associated with the oral cavity and digestive tract, leading to inflammation and secondary infections. There is evidence that excessive khat use can cause psychological problems such as depression and anxiety leading to drug-induced psychosis. There have been some reports of poisonings of khat chewers as a result of the inappropriate use of fertilisers used in farming. There is also some evidence of increased risk of oral cancer.

**Overdose risk**  
There is no known record of khat resulting in overdose, although it would be likely to act with other stimulants causing palpitations and agitation.
**Stimulants**

**Crystal Methamphetamine**

Methamphetamine was first synthesized in 1887, but went unnoticed until it became the alternative to ephedrine, a drug commonly used to treat asthma. Medically produced amphetamines (including methamphetamine) were used in Japan, Britain, Germany and the US during the Second World War to enable soldiers to stay awake, alert and compulsively focussed. Methamphetamine use and its spread is of concern in several countries, particularly in South East Asia (Thailand and Japan), the USA, Australia and the Czech Republic. It is relatively uncommon in Ireland presently, although the drug's widespread use abroad and its appearance on the dance scene have led to fears of it becoming more popular. The drug is relatively cheap and easy to manufacture although methods may involve inflammable chemicals and the release of toxic fumes. The chemicals needed to manufacture the drug (e.g., ephedrine, red phosphorous and iodine) are readily available.

**Street name**
The drug is also known by the street names of 'crystal meth', 'crank', 'tina' or 'ice'. Its euphoric effects are similar to but more intense and longer lasting than those of cocaine.

**Drug effect**
Methamphetamine is a central nervous system stimulant with a high potential for misuse and dependence. A synthetic drug, it is closely related chemically to amphetamine ('speed') but produces greater effects on the central nervous system. The drug alters mood in different ways, depending on how it is taken. Immediately after smoking or injecting the user experiences an intense rush similar to that produced by crack cocaine but longer lasting. Even small amounts of methamphetamine can produce euphoria, arousal, wakefulness, increased physical activity, decreased appetite and increased respiration. Common side effects include nausea, panic attacks, compulsive repetitive behaviour and jaw clenching.

**Description**
Methamphetamine takes the form of a white odourless and bitter tasting crystalline powder, readily soluble in water or alcohol, and can also be produced in tablet or powder form. It can be smoked, injected, snorted or consumed orally.

**Dependency**
Regular use of methamphetamine can lead to dependency, with increased tolerance to the effects of the drug and physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms.
**Stimulants**

**Crystal Methamphetamine (continued)**

**Withdrawal**
Withdrawal symptoms can include depression, anxiety and craving for the drug. Some studies have linked reduced motor skills with methamphetamine use, which may be indicative of a predisposition towards Parkinson’s disease for users of the drug.

**Long-term use**
Effects can last between 4 and 12 hours, depending on the route of administration, which equates to between four and twelve times the duration of cocaine’s effects. It can cause psychiatric problems with symptoms resembling those associated with paranoid schizophrenia, such as paranoia and hallucinations. Methamphetamine induced psychosis can result in homicidal or suicidal thoughts. It is also associated with violent and aggressive behaviour and with acquisitive crime.
Drug users who inject the drug are at risk of infection from HIV, hepatitis C and hepatitis B if they share needles and other injecting paraphernalia. Increased sexual arousal and loss of inhibition increase the likelihood of unsafe sexual practices. Heavy and regular users of the drug may suffer tooth loss and decay, a condition known as ‘meth mouth’.
**Stimulants**

**Methamphetamine (methedrine)**

Drug effect  
Has a very strong and long-lived stimulant effect

Description  
White/yellow/pink crystalline powder, clear liquid, ampoules (meth). Small whitish chips (ice). Most methamphetamine is illicitly manufactured and, as such, is of questionable quality.

Therapeutic use  
Methedrine is no longer available on prescription.

Method of use  
Smoked or injected

Dependency  
Yes, though mainly psychological

Withdrawal  
Tolerance to methamphetamine develops quickly. The effects last from three to four hours. Like amphetamine sulphate, withdrawal is in two phases. Firstly, the “crash” or “come down”, which produces tiredness and depression. In the second phase, users can become irritable and severely depressed. This will last for three to four weeks and in some cases, can last for months.

Long-term use  
Prolonged use of methamphetamine can lead to severe weight loss, insomnia, exhaustion, paranoid psychosis (this is generally drug-induced and as such will be resolved within a few weeks after drug taking has stopped) and severe depression. Smoking “ice” over long periods causes severe psychotic episodes with both visual and auditory hallucinations, presenting not unlike schizophrenia.

Overdose Risk  
Overdose is not so common with methamphetamine, but when it does occur, it can result in heart and/or respiratory failure. Users who exhibit a predisposition for a heart condition are at risk due to excess stress placed on the cardiovascular system.
Stimulants

Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) (Ecstasy)

Drug effect
Has a very strong and long-lived stimulant effect.

Street name
Ecstasy, E, Eccy, adam XTC, Dennis the Menace. Sometimes known by “brand names” such as “doves”, “speckled doves”, “new yorkers” or “mercedes”, though these names frequently change as the logos change.

Drug effect
Stimulant with mild psychedelic effect. Possible hallucinogenic effect, particularly in high doses.

Description
Off-white or occasionally coloured tablets
Clear or coloured capsules
White powder (rare)

Method of use
Particularly associated with the dance music scene. Usually taken by mouth.

Dependency
Psychological

Withdrawal
Tolerance to Ecstasy develops with time, but not as rapidly as cocaine or amphetamine. Drug effects begin within 20-60 minutes after use. There is no evidence of physical withdrawal, although after-effects of the drug can include fatigue, depression and anxiety. “Flashbacks” following repeated use over several days have been reported.

Long-term use
Ecstasy use can be associated with anxiety, panic attacks and insomnia, especially in cases of long-term use, or use of large doses. Increased susceptibility to minor infections such as colds, flu and sore throats has also been reported. Some female users have reported an increase in genito-urinary infections. Pre-existing conditions such as high blood pressure, glaucoma and epilepsy can be exacerbated. In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that Ecstasy may have the potential to cause brain damage associated with mood disorders. Ecstasy increases body temperature and has a dehydrating effect. Users should take care to replenish lost body fluids and take regular breaks from physical exertion to help avoid dehydration and overheating. In acute cases of Ecstasy-related overheating and dehydration, the body temperature regulation system can be impaired, or break down altogether.
Overdose risk
Overdose risk still needs to be properly assessed. However, there have been a number of deaths in the UK linked to the use of Ecstasy. Most of these are thought to have been associated with a rare but fatal drug reaction which can cause blood clots to develop in the lungs. Furthermore, heat stroke or dehydration are also thought to be possible contributing factors. There is also evidence that Ecstasy can damage the liver. The risk of overdose from MDA (a close relative of MDMA which is stronger and often sold as Ecstasy) is significantly greater. (A dose of 500mg of MDA has proved fatal in tests. Such a dose is the equivalent of 3 street tablets.) Some deaths associated with the taking of Ecstasy have been attributed to dilutional hyponatremia. That is, people have drunk too much water in attempting to counteract the dehydrating effect of the drug. One effect of MDMA is to cause the release of a hormone called anti-diuretic hormone (ADH) which prevents the production of dilute urine. Excessive drinking in turn causes fluid buildup inside the body cells, particularly in the brain, which soaks up the fluid and is eventually “crushed” as it swells against the inside of the skull. All its functions are irreparably damaged, which leads to death.
**Stimulants**

**Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) (Ecstasy)**

Ecstasy is sometimes referred to as a hallucinogenic stimulant. Its effects will therefore include those listed for stimulants.

In addition it can cause:
- increased temperature.
- possibly excessive sweating.
- very dry mouth and throat.
- hallucinations and heightened perceptions which may make users more tactile or dreamy.
- jerky, uncoordinated movements.
- repetitive movements - many users want to dance.
- clenched jaws/grinding teeth.
- uncontrolled jaw movements caused by muscle spasms.
- occasional nausea when first used.
- fatigue after use, possibly accompanied by some anxiety, depression and muscle pain.
- weight loss.

**Ecstasy effects**

One particular effect of Ecstasy is overheating, especially after constant dancing in a club with a hot atmosphere. In these circumstances it is very important that the person who has taken Ecstasy cools down and re-hydrates quickly.

- Give them water to drink - but not too much or too quickly - take them to a cool place,
- loosen their clothing and apply cool damp cloths or towels to the back of their neck.
- If they stop sweating and/or collapse, phone for an ambulance immediately.
- Put them in the recovery position and keep trying to cool them down.
- If they stop breathing begin mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and tell the ambulance crew exactly what has happened and what the person has taken.
- If the person has taken a hallucinogen, such as LSD, magic mushrooms, or cannabis in combination with Ecstasy, they may become very anxious, distressed and fearful. They may act in an unusual way.
- It is very important to reassure the person - tell them that you will look after them, that they are in no danger, that it is the effects of the drug and that the effects will soon wear off.
- You may want to take them to a quiet place, keep other people away, and continue to reassure them. Just stay with them and talk calmly to them. This may take a long time depending on the amount taken.
- If they show no signs of becoming calmer, or they become hysterical, take them to hospital - explain calmly to the person what is happening - this will help decrease any feelings of panic.
**Volatile Substances**

A range of volatile substances are available directly over the counter. Those most commonly used fall into four categories:

1. Adhesives and Glues
2. Aerosols
3. Cleaning and de-greasing agents
4. Petrol, lighter fuel and other products.
5. Poppers

**Street use**
Vapours from volatile substances are usually inhaled directly from their containers or from polythene bags.

**Drug effect**
Vapours from volatile substances pass rapidly from the lungs to the brain, causing depression of the central nervous system. Effects similar to acute alcoholic intoxication occur within two to three minutes. Feelings of euphoria are very common and some users report hallucinations. If inhalation (sniffing) continues, there is further depression of the central nervous system, which leads to loss of awareness, judgement and muscular coordination and eventual coma. The intoxicating effects last for 15-60 minutes after sniffing ceases. Sniffers often report a mild “hangover” for up to a day after use.

**Dependency**
Tolerance develops so that, over time, greater and greater quantities of volatile substance are required to produce the same effect.

**Withdrawal**
Occasional mild physical withdrawal symptoms, such as headaches, have been noted. However, psychological rather than physical dependence is more common.

**Long-term use**
Following regular use of volatile substances, “sniffers rash”, memory impairment and loss of concentration have been reported. With chronic use, loss of muscular coordination, slurring of speech and vision impairment are common. However, these effects are usually reversible if sniffing stops. Long-term heavy use (10 years or more) may lead to permanent brain damage. A small number of cases involving permanent liver and kidney damage have also been reported.

**Overdose risk**
Every year, there are over 100 deaths in the UK linked to sniffing. Deaths in Northern Ireland are far less frequent but do occur. Over half are linked directly to the toxic effects of substances inhaled. The remainder are caused by a combination of accidents, inhalation of vomit and suffocation caused by a plastic bag over the head.

**Risks in pregnancy**
Volatile substances pass the placental barrier but there is little information about their effects on the foetus.
**Volatile Substances**

**Adhesives and Glues**

**Products**
Contact adhesives, glues, plastic cement, rubber solution adhesives.

**Substances**
Toluene, N-hexane, Xylene and Trichloroethylene.

**Drug effect**
Depressant

**Method of use**
Usually inhaled from polythene bag

**Dependency**
Yes (mainly psychological)

**Withdrawal**
Tolerance develops within three months of regular sniffing sessions. Occasional minor physical withdrawal symptoms include headaches.

**Long-term use**
Chronic users may have “sniffers rash” (usually around mouth and nose) and show impaired performance on memory, intelligence and concentration tests. In most cases, functions return to normal once solvent use ceases. Toluene has been implicated in reversible impairment of the central nervous system and visual problems. However, in a small number of cases, loss of brain tissue has also been reported. N-hexane has been linked to visual problems and limb dysfunction, while trichloroethylene has been associated with a small number of cases of liver/kidney damage.
Volatile Substances

Aerosols

Products
Perfume sprays, deodorants, paint sprays, fly sprays, pain-relieving sprays, air fresheners.

Substances
Propane, Butane, Chlorinated-fluorocarbons.

Drug effect
Depressant.

Method of use
Volatile substances are inhaled directly from canisters or sprayed into a plastic bag and then inhaled.

Dependency
Yes (mainly psychological).

Withdrawal
Tolerance develops with repeated use. Occasional physical withdrawal has been noted.

Long-term use
Aerosol propellants, particularly butane, are thought to sensitize the heart to excitement or exertion. This can cause cardiac failure if the user exerts him/herself during or immediately after use.

Overdose risk
Cooling effects of aerosol sprays on the larynx (back of throat) may make it swell and can cause death by suffocation. As noted, butane has also been linked to sudden death caused by heart failure. For this reason, it is advised that sniffers are never startled or chased if they are discovered sniffing.

Example of Nitrous Oxide hardware kit available in the United States
**Volatile Substances**

**Cleaning and de-greasing agents**

**Products**
Industrial and domestic dry cleaners, degreasing agents, typewriter corrector fluid and thinners, nail varnish remover.

**Substances**
1,1,1-trichloroethane, Tetrachloroethane, Tetrachloroethylene, Methylene chloride, Carbon tetrachloride, Acetone

**Drug effect**
Depressant

**Method of use**
Inhaled directly from container or absorbent material soaked in agent.

**Dependency**
Yes (mainly psychological)

**Withdrawal**
Tolerance develops with repeated use. Occasional physical withdrawal has been noted.

**Long-term use**
Similar to long-term use of adhesives. Trichloro/tetrachloroethane and tetrachloroethylene have also been implicated in a few cases of liver/kidney damage. Carbon chloride is highly toxic and causes liver and brain damage.

**Overdose risk**
This group of solvents (particularly those containing 1,1,1-trichloroethane) is associated with about a third of solvent-related deaths.
**Volatile Substances**

**Petrol, lighter fuel and other products**

**Products**
Gas lighter fuels, petrol, fire extinguishers

**Substances**
Gas lighter fuel: Butane Petrol;-Benzene Tetraethyl-lead, Fire extinguishers: Bromodichloro-fluoro methane.

**Drug effect**
Depressant

**Method of use**
Usually inhaled directly from canister

**Dependency**
Yes (mainly psychological)

**Withdrawal**
Tolerance develops with repeated use. Occasional physical withdrawal has been noted.

**Long-term use**
Similar to the long-term use of adhesives. Sniffing petrol has been linked to permanent brain damage. However, it is unclear whether this is due to the hydrocarbons or the tetraethyl-lead added to leaded petrol. Benzene is highly toxic and has been shown to cause bone marrow depression.

**Overdose risk**
The inhalation of gas fuels (mainly butane) has been linked to about 25% of deaths. However, since its use is less common than the inhalation of solvents from adhesives, it appears to be significantly more dangerous. The pressurised gas in both gas lighter fuels and fire extinguishers makes the inhalation of these products extremely dangerous - as with the inhalation of aerosols, there is a significant risk of suffocation caused by swelling of the larynx (back of the throat). Butane is also thought to sensitise the heart to exertion, which can lead to heart failure.
Volatile Substances

Poppers

Products
Alkyl nitrites are related to nitrous oxide (laughing gas) and are clear yellow volatile liquids. They are available for sale at some retail outlets and by mail order. Drugs include amyl nitrite (rush or poppers) and butyl nitrite (poppers).

Drug effect
Alkyl nitrites are vasodilators. They cause dilation of the blood vessels leading to the heart. This is accompanied by a drop in blood pressure and an increase in heart rate. Users report a “rush” and experience euphoria and dizziness. The effects following inhalation are virtually instantaneous and last from two to five minutes. Alkyl nitrites also increase sexual arousal and cause the rectal sphincter to relax, easing anal intercourse.

Method of use
Alkyl nitrites are used mainly by members of the male gay community, who inhale volatile fumes to enhance sexual arousal and performance. However, recreational and experimental use has also been reported among other groups of young people.

Dependency
Tolerance develops within two to three weeks if used on a daily basis. However, this is lost following a few days of abstinence. There have been no reports of withdrawal symptoms, either physical or psychological. Hence dependency does not appear to be a problem.

Long-term use
Alkyl nitrites are excreted rapidly from the body and there do not appear to be any serious consequences of long-term use among healthy adults. However, people with a history of heart problems and glaucoma may be at risk because of the increased strain on the cardio-vascular system.

Overdose risk
Excessive use can lead to lack of oxygen in the blood. Users become cyanosed, which gives their skin and lips a blue colour. This is usually accompanied by severe vomiting and can lead to clinical shock and loss of consciousness. Deaths have occurred when nitrites have been swallowed.
Volatile Substances

General Information on Solvent Misuse

Solvents include glues, butane gas refills, aerosols, typewriting correcting fluids and thinners. Signs of solvent misuse include:
- usual signs of intoxication.
- possible odour on clothes and breath.
- if using glue, redness around mouth and nose.
- a cough.
- possible stains on clothing depending on type of solvent used.
- persistent coughing with a runny nose and eyes.

Short-term effects of Inhalants
- Sniffing or huffing inhalants can kill on the very first use or any use! Inhalants cause massive health damage in both the short and long-term.

The physical damage includes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short Term Effects</th>
<th>Long Term Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Sensation</td>
<td>Compulsive Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drowsiness &amp; lack of energy</td>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taking behaviour</td>
<td>Disorientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light headedness</td>
<td>Weight loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agitation</td>
<td>Irregular or rapid heart beat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>Irritability and or depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of concern about life around them</td>
<td>Impaired thinking ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor judgement</td>
<td>Dementia lose contact with reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to function in their environment</td>
<td>Lose sense of touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slurred Speech</td>
<td>Deafness and or blindness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor reflexes</td>
<td>Reproductive complications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscle weakness</td>
<td>Bone marrow injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor coordination</td>
<td>Lung, heart, liver or kidney damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion and delirium</td>
<td>Damage to nerve cells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausea and vomiting</td>
<td>Brain shrinkage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconsciousness and or sudden death</td>
<td>Possible death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Volatile Substances

Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome

Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome (SSDS) is the most common killer of inhalant abusers. A victim may be trying inhalants for the first time, or may have tried them any number of times in the past. SSDS occurs when an abuser is surprised or startled while sniffing or huffing. Often, this occurs when a parent or other authority figure finds the person inhaling. An especially exciting or frightening hallucination could also trigger SSDS. When the abuser is surprised or startled, he has a sudden surge of the hormone epinephrine. Epinephrine is also called adrenaline. Epinephrine aids in regulating the functions of the body that are beyond a person’s conscious control, like heart rate. When a person is highly stimulated (by fear or challenge, for example,) extra amounts of epinephrine are released into the bloodstream to prepare the body for energetic action. Epinephrine increases blood pressure, heart rate, and cardiac output. The presence of the chemical inhalants in the body makes the heart muscle more sensitive to epinephrine. When the surge of epinephrine reaches the heart, the heart suffers an arrhythmia (irregular heart beat). This massive arrhythmia kills the user in seconds.

Central Nervous System Damage

Many of the chemicals found in commonly abused inhalants cause severe and permanent brain and nerve cell damage. Brain scans of inhalant abusers show dramatic shrinkage in the overall size of the brain. Abusers also lose “white matter” in the brain, which is responsible for conducting nerve impulses throughout the body. The white matter is destroyed because each cell is encased in myelin, a lipid or fat, and many commonly used inhalants are lipid-solvents; that is, their purpose is to break down lipids.

Chronic inhalant abusers suffer massive central nervous system damage, which results in dementia (lost contact with reality) and loss of cerebellum function. The cerebellum is the portion of the brain that coordinates movements of the voluntary muscles. Abusers lose the ability to think, reason, learn, and remember. Their way of walking becomes abnormal and they lose coordination.
Miscellaneous Substances

Anabolic steroids
(e.g. Durabolin, Stanozolol, Dianabol)

Street name
Iron Brew

Drug effect
Users take the drug as an aid to muscle development, though there is a strong chance that users will become more aggressive.

Method of use
Tablets, injections, capsules.

Dependency
Psychological dependence is common.

Therapeutic use
Can be used in the treatment of anaemia, thrombosis and often used to build muscle for patients who are long-term bed-ridden.

Withdrawal
Some steroid users have reported lethargy and depression on stopping use.

Long-term use
It is difficult to offer conclusive evidence regarding the effects of long-term steroid use as most users are taking multiple combinations and at doses that are well above the recommended level. There is some clear evidence that persistent and heavy use may cause infertility or lack of sex drive in men. Conversely, some men may become sexually violent. Women may develop masculine side-effects, such as a deeper voice and smaller breasts.

Overdose risk
Can cause high blood pressure. In extreme cases, they can cause liver damage and there is some evidence of liver cancer.