THE TRUTH ABOUT
DRUGS
Drugs destroy and ruin millions of lives every year. What should YOU know about them?
Ecstasy
LSD Speed
Cocaine
Marijuana
drugfreeworld.org

WHY THIS BOOKLET WAS PRODUCED

There is a lot of talk about drugs in the world—on the streets, at school, on the Internet and TV. Some of it is true, some not.

Much of what you hear about drugs actually comes from those selling them. Reformed drug dealers have confessed they would have said anything to get others to buy drugs.

Don't be fooled. You need facts to avoid becoming hooked on drugs and to help your friends stay off them. That is why we have prepared this booklet—for you.

Your feedback is important to us, so we look forward to hearing from you. You can visit us on the web at **drugfreeworld.org** and e-mail us at **info@drugfreeworld.org**.

Our Drug Culture

Drugs have been part of our culture since the middle of the last century. Popularised in the 1960s by music and mass media, they invade all aspects of society.

An estimated 208 million people internationally consume illegal drugs. A survey done in 2007 showed that over one-third of Australians aged 14 years or older had used an illegal drug at least once. Cannabis was the illegal drug most widely used, with around 40 percent of 16- to 17-year-olds having tried it.

You probably know someone who has been affected by drugs, directly or indirectly.

The most commonly used drug is alcohol. Between 1993 and 2007, the number of Australians aged 14 or older who had recently used a drug decreased for marijuana, but increased for alcohol and most of the illegal drugs.

The most commonly used illegal drug is marijuana. According to the United Nations 2008 World Drug Report, about 3.9% of the world's population between the ages of 15 and 64 abuse marijuana.

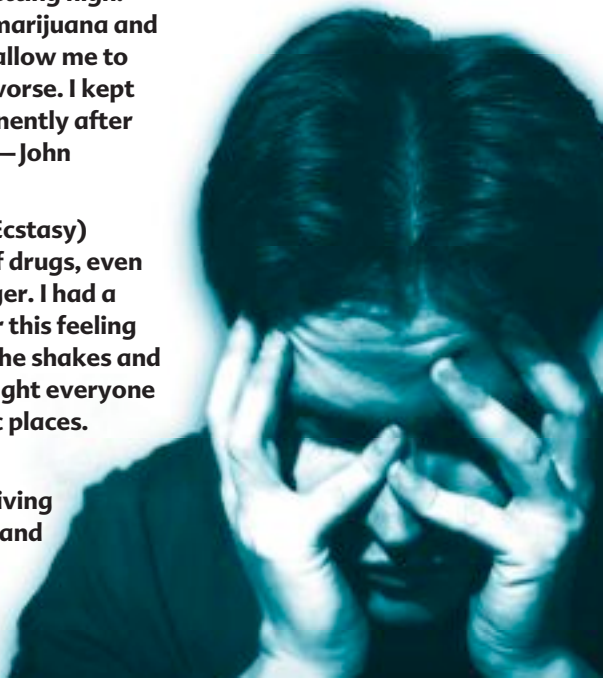
Young people today are exposed earlier than ever to drugs. According to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey of Australians aged 14-19, 74 percent had tried alcohol in 2007 and 20.9 percent were drinking alcohol on a weekly basis. The survey showed that over 500,000 Australians had driven a motor vehicle in the past year while under the influence of illegal drugs.

In Europe, recent studies among 15- and 16-year-olds suggest that use of marijuana varies from under 10 percent to over 40 percent, with the highest rates reported by teens in the Czech Republic (44%), followed by Ireland (39%), the UK (38%) and France (38%). In Spain and the United Kingdom, cocaine use among 15- to 16-year-olds is 4 perc ent to 6 percent. Cocaine use among young people has risen in Denmark, Italy, Spain, UK, Norway and France.

My goal in life wasn't living…it was getting high. Over the years, I turned to cocaine, marijuana and alcohol under a false belief it would allow me to escape my problems. It just made things worse. I kept saying to myself, I'm going to stop permanently after using one last time. It never happened." —John

It started with the weed, then the pills (Ecstasy) and acid, making cocktails of all sorts of drugs, even overdosing to make the rushes last longer. I had a bad trip one night…I prayed and cried for this feeling to go away, I had voices in my head, had the shakes and couldn't leave home for six months. I thought everyone was watching me. I couldn't walk in public places. Man! I couldn't even drive.

"I ended up homeless and on the streets, living and sleeping in a cardboard box, begging and struggling to find ways to get my next meal." —Ben



Why Do People Take Drugs?

People take drugs because they want to change something about their lives.

Here are some of the reasons young people have given for taking drugs:

- To fit in
- To escape or relax
- To relieve boredom
- To seem grown up
- To rebel
- To experiment

They think drugs are a solution. But eventually, the drugs become the problem.

Difficult as it may be to face one's problems, the consequences of drug use are always worse than the problem one is trying to solve with them. The real answer is to get the facts and not to take drugs in the first place.

How Do Drugs Work?

Drugs are essentially poisons. The amount taken determines the effect.

A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds you up). A greater amount acts as a sedative (slows you down). An even larger amount poisons and can kill.

This is true of any drug. Only the amount needed to achieve the effect differs.

But many drugs have another liability: they directly affect the mind. They can distort the user's perception of what is happening around him or her. As a result, the person's actions may be odd, irrational, inappropriate and even destructive.

Drugs block off all sensations, the desirable ones with the unwanted. So, while providing short-term help in the relief of pain, they also wipe out ability and alertness and muddy one's thinking.

Medicines are drugs that are intended to speed up or slow down or change something about the way your body is working, to try to make it work better. Sometimes they are necessary. But they are still drugs: they act as stimulants or sedatives, and too much can kill you. So if you do not use medicines as they are supposed to be used, they can be as dangerous as illegal drugs.

Drugs Affect the Mind

Normally, when a person remembers something, the mind is very fast and information comes to him quickly. But drugs blur memory, causing blank spots. When a person tries to get information through this cloudy mess, he can't do it. Drugs make a person feel slow or stupid and cause him to have failures in life. And as he has more failures and life gets harder, he wants more drugs to help him deal with the problem.

Drugs Destroy Creativity

One lie told about drugs is that they help a person become more creative. The truth is quite different.

Someone who is sad might use drugs to get a feeling of happiness, but it does not work. Drugs can lift a person into a fake kind of cheerfulness, but when the drug wears off, he or she crashes even lower than before. And each time, the emotional plunge is lower and lower. Eventually, drugs will completely destroy all the creativity a person has.

During the whole time I was on drugs I thought I had control over my life and that I had it great. But I destroyed everything I had built up and fought for in my life. I cut ties to all my drug-free friends and my family, so I hadn't any friends but my drug mates. Every day revolved around one thing: my plan for getting the money I needed for drugs. I would do everything possible to get my amphetamine—it was the only thing in my life." — Pat

I felt that I was more fun when I was drunk. Soon after [I started drinking] I was introduced to marijuana.... Later, I was hanging out at a friend's house smoking marijuana when someone pulled out a bag of cocaine. Snorting cocaine quickly became a daily habit. I was stealing money from my parents' business and from my grandparents on a daily basis to support my alcohol, cocaine, marijuana and LSD habits. Then I was introduced to OxyContin and began using it on a regular basis. By the time I realised I was addicted, snorting OxyContin was part of my daily routine. I needed something stronger—and was introduced to heroin. I would stop at nothing to get high. My addiction was winning. And every time I tried to kick it, the physical craving would send me back for more." — Edith

BASIC FACTS ABOUT COMMONLY ABUSED DRUGS

The facts about these commonly abused drugs have been compiled from the references at the end of this booklet. They are included here to provide you with the truth about what these drugs are and what they do.

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MARIJUANA

Marijuana is usually rolled up in a cigarette called a joint or a nail. It can also be brewed as a tea or mixed with food, or smoked through a water pipe called a bong.

According to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey of Australians aged 14-19, one in five had tried cannabis* in 2007.

STREET NAMES:

- Weed
- Blunt
- Grass
- Herb
- Pot
- Reefer
- Smoke
- Mary Jane
- Skunk
- Boom
- Gangster
- Chronic
- Mull
- Ganja
- Super Skunk
- Purple Haze
- Dope
- Nederweed

According to one Australian study published in 2007, 46.7 percent of drivers tested, who had been admitted to an emergency centre in Melbourne after a car crash, had cannabis in their system.

Marijuana is often more potent today than it used to be. Growing techniques and selective use of seeds have produced a more powerful drug. As a result, there has been a sharp increase in the number of marijuana-related emergency room visits by young pot smokers.

Because a tolerance builds up, marijuana can lead users to consume stronger drugs to achieve the same high. When the effects start to wear off, the person may turn to more potent drugs to rid himself of the

* cannabis: any of the different drugs that come from Indian hemp, including marijuana and hashish.

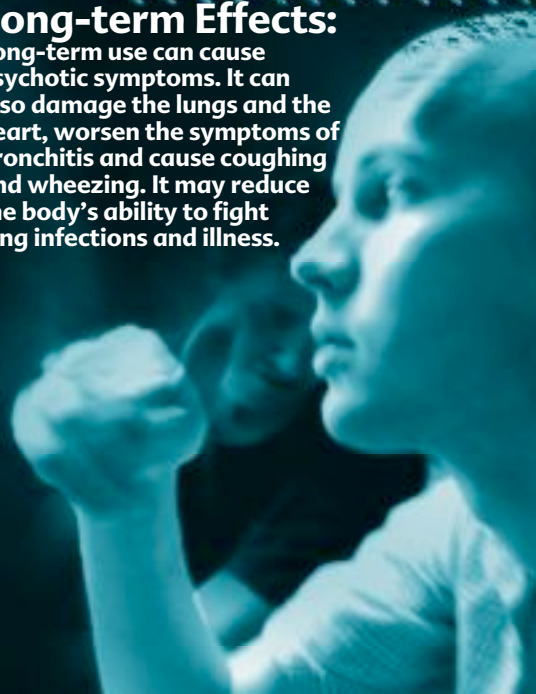
unwanted conditions that prompted him to take marijuana in the first place. Marijuana itself does not lead the person to the other drugs: people take drugs to get rid of unwanted situations or feelings. Marijuana masks the problem for a time while the user is high. When the "high" fades, the problem, unwanted condition or situation returns more intensely than before. The user may then turn to stronger drugs since marijuana no longer "works."

Short-term Effects:

Loss of coordination and distortions in the sense of time, vision and hearing, sleepiness, reddening of the eyes, increased appetite and relaxed muscles. Heart rate can speed up. In fact, in the first hour of smoking marijuana, a user's risk of a heart attack could increase fivefold. School performance is reduced through impaired memory and lessened ability to solve problems.

Long-term Effects:

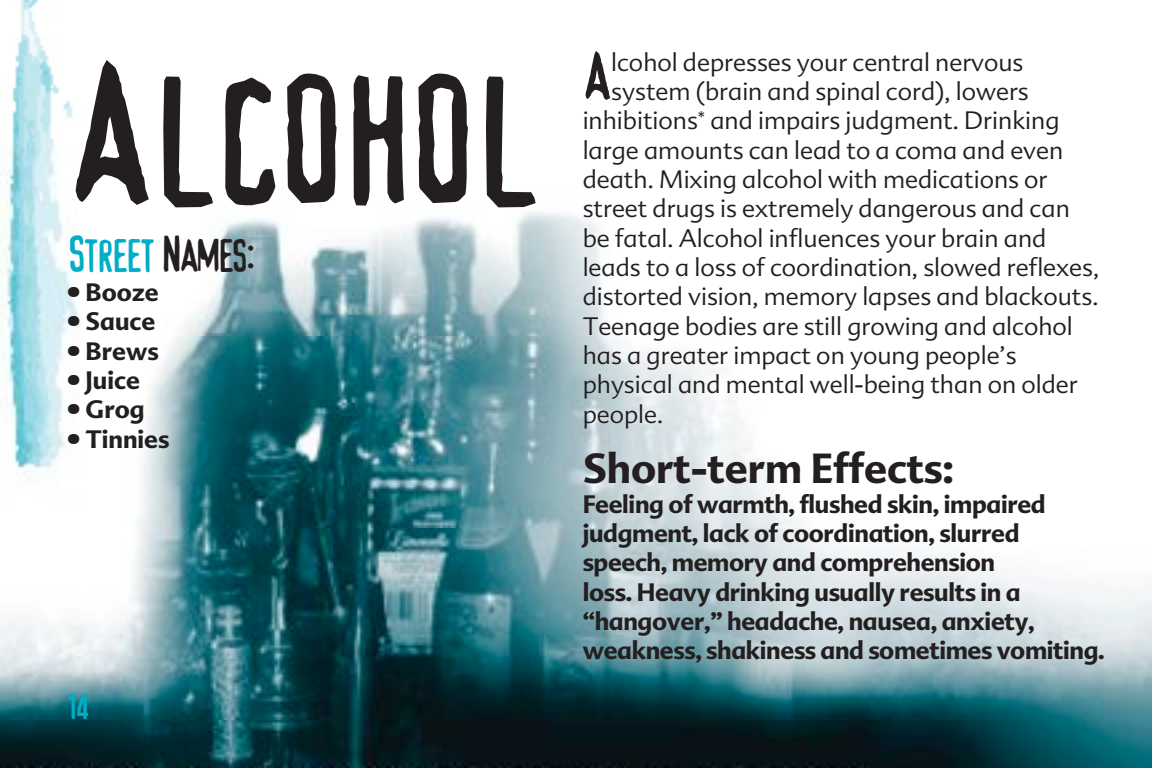
Long-term use can cause psychotic symptoms. It can also damage the lungs and the heart, worsen the symptoms of bronchitis and cause coughing and wheezing. It may reduce the body's ability to fight lung infections and illness.



ALCOHOL

STREET NAMES:

- **Booze**
- **Sauce**
- **Brews**
- **Juice**
- **Grog**
- **Tinnies**



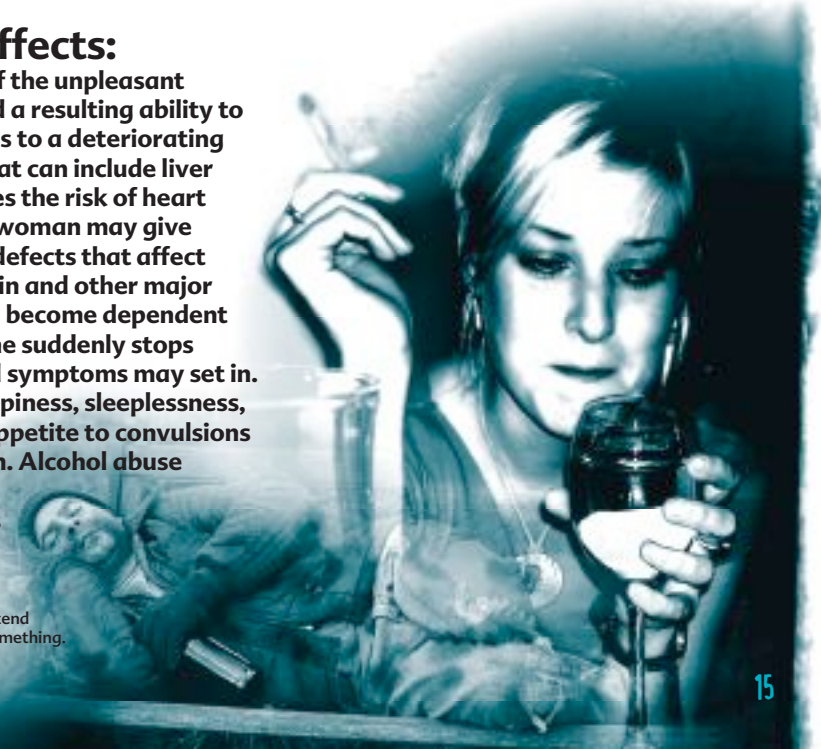
Alcohol depresses your central nervous system (brain and spinal cord), lowers inhibitions* and impairs judgment. Drinking large amounts can lead to a coma and even death. Mixing alcohol with medications or street drugs is extremely dangerous and can be fatal. Alcohol influences your brain and leads to a loss of coordination, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses and blackouts. Teenage bodies are still growing and alcohol has a greater impact on young people's physical and mental well-being than on older people.

Short-term Effects:

Feeling of warmth, flushed skin, impaired judgment, lack of coordination, slurred speech, memory and comprehension loss. Heavy drinking usually results in a "hangover," headache, nausea, anxiety, weakness, shakiness and sometimes vomiting.

Long-term Effects:

Tolerance to many of the unpleasant effects of alcohol and a resulting ability to drink more. This leads to a deteriorating physical condition that can include liver damage and increases the risk of heart disease. A pregnant woman may give birth to a baby with defects that affect the baby's heart, brain and other major organs. A person can become dependent on alcohol. If someone suddenly stops drinking, withdrawal symptoms may set in. They range from jumpiness, sleeplessness, sweating and poor appetite to convulsions and sometimes death. Alcohol abuse can also lead to violence and conflicts in one's personal relationships.



* inhibitions: ideas or rules that tend to stop a person from doing something.

Ecstasy

Street Names:

- E
- XTC
- X
- Adam
- Hug
- Beans
- Clarity
- Lover's Speed
- Love Drug

Ecstasy is usually taken orally in pill, tablet or capsule form. Taking more than one at a time is called "bumping."

Ecstasy is a synthetic (man-made) drug made in a laboratory. Makers may add anything they choose to the drug, such as caffeine, amphetamine* and even cocaine. Ecstasy is illegal and has effects similar to hallucinogens and stimulants. The pills are of different colours and are sometimes marked with cartoon-like images. Mixing Ecstasy with alcohol is extremely dangerous and can be lethal.

The stimulative effects of drugs such as Ecstasy enable the user to dance for long periods, and when combined with the hot, crowded conditions found at raves, can lead to extreme dehydration and heart or kidney failure.

Short-term Effects:

- Impaired judgment
- False sense of affection
- Confusion
- Depression
- Sleep problems
- Severe anxiety
- Paranoia†
- Drug craving
- Muscle tension
- Involuntary teeth clenching
- Nausea
- Blurred vision
- Faintness
- Chills or sweating

Long-term Effects:

- Prolonged use causes long-lasting and perhaps permanent damage to the brain, affecting the person's judgment and thinking ability.

* amphetamine: a central nervous system stimulant, often called "speed."
† paranoia: suspicion, distrust or fear of other people.

Ecstasy made me crazy. One day I bit glass, just like I would have bitten an apple. I had to have my mouth full of pieces of glass to realize what was happening to me. Another time I tore rags with my teeth for an hour." — Ann

Cocaine & Crack Cocaine

Cocaine and crack cocaine can be taken orally, through the nose (snorted), injected with a syringe or, in the case of crack, through inhalation of the fumes from heating it.

The terms used to describe ingestion include chewing, snorting, mainlining (injecting into a large vein) and smoking.

The word *cocaine* refers to the drug in a powder form (cocaine) and a crystal form (crack).

Street Names:

- Coke
- Crack
- Flake
- Rocks
- Snow
- Charlie
- Sniff

It is made from the coca plant and, next to methamphetamine,* creates the greatest psychological dependence of any drug.

Short-term Effects:

Cocaine causes a short-lived intense high that is immediately followed by the opposite—intense feelings of depression and edginess and a craving for more of the drug. People who use it often don't eat or sleep properly. They can experience greatly increased heart rate, muscle spasms and convulsions. The drug can make people feel paranoid, angry, hostile and anxious, even when they aren't high.

* methamphetamine: a highly addictive central nervous system stimulant.

Long-term Effects:

In addition to those effects already mentioned, cocaine can cause irritability, mood disturbances, restlessness, paranoia and auditory (hearing) hallucinations. Tolerance to the drug develops so that more is needed to produce the same "high."

Coming down from the drug causes severe depression, which becomes deeper and deeper after each use. This can get so severe that a person will do almost anything to get the drug—even commit murder. And if he or she can't get cocaine, the depression can get so intense it can drive the addict to suicide.

Crystal Meth & Methamphetamine

Crystal meth and meth are inhaled, smoked or injected. Low doses are in pill form.

Crystal meth is a form of methamphetamine that resembles small fragments of glass or shiny blue-white rocks. On the street, it is known as "ice," "crystal," "glass," "P" and other names. It is a highly powerful and addictive man-made stimulant that causes aggression and violent or psychotic behaviour. Many users report getting hooked (addicted) from the first time they use it. It is one of the hardest drugs to treat.

Street Names:

- Speed
- Meth
- Crystal
- Crank
- Tweak
- Go-fast
- Ice
- Glass
- Tina
- Quartz
- P

Short-term Effects:

Negative effects can include disturbed sleep patterns, hyperactivity, nausea, delusions of power, increased aggressiveness and irritability. Can cause decreased hunger and bring on weight loss. In higher doses has a greater "rush," followed by increased agitation and sometimes violence. Other effects can include insomnia, confusion, hallucinations, anxiety and paranoia. Can cause convulsions leading to death.

Long-term Effects:

Increased heart rate and blood pressure, damage to blood vessels in the brain, leading to strokes or irregular heart beat and cardiovascular (involving the heart and blood vessels) collapse or death. Can cause liver, kidney and lung damage. Users may suffer brain damage, including memory impairment and an increasing inability to grasp abstract thoughts. Those who recover are usually subject to memory gaps and extreme mood swings.

Crystal meth was my drug of choice, but there were others too—cheap, easy to get, easy to become addicted to and, of course, easy to use. I tried it once and BOOM! I was addicted. One of the main things that this affected was my music career. I had a great band and played great music and had great members who weren't only band members but best friends. That all changed when I started using meth." —Brad

INHALANTS

STREET NAMES:

- **Poppers**
- **Whippets**
- **Laughing Gas**
- **Rush**
- **Chroming**

Inhalants include chemicals found in such household products as aerosol sprays, cleaning fluids, glue, paint, paint thinner, nail polish remover, amyl nitrite* and lighter fuel. They are sniffed or "huffed" (act of inhaling vapours).

Inhalants affect the brain. When substances or fumes are inhaled through the nose or mouth, they can cause permanent physical and mental damage. They starve the body of oxygen and force the heart to beat irregularly and more rapidly. People who use inhalants can lose their sense of smell, suffer nausea and nosebleeds and may develop liver, lung and kidney problems. Continued use can lead to reduced muscle mass, tone and strength. Inhalants can

make people unable to walk, talk and think normally. Much of the damage is caused to the brain tissue when the toxic fumes are sniffed straight into the sinus.†

Short-term Effects:

In addition to the above, inhalants can kill a person by heart attack or suffocation as the inhaled fumes take the place of oxygen in the lungs and central nervous system. Someone on inhalants may also suddenly react with extreme violence.

Long-term Effects:

Can lead to muscle wasting and reduced muscle tone and strength. Can permanently damage the body and brain.

* amyl nitrite: a pale yellow liquid used to open or widen blood vessels, sometimes abused as a stimulant.

† sinus: one of the open spaces in the front of the skull that a person breathes through with the nose.

HEROIN

Heroin is usually injected, snorted or smoked. It is highly addictive. Heroin enters the brain rapidly but makes people think and react slowly, impairing their decision-making ability. It causes difficulty in remembering things.

STREET NAMES:

- Horse
- Smack
- H
- Skag
- Junk
- Brown Sugar

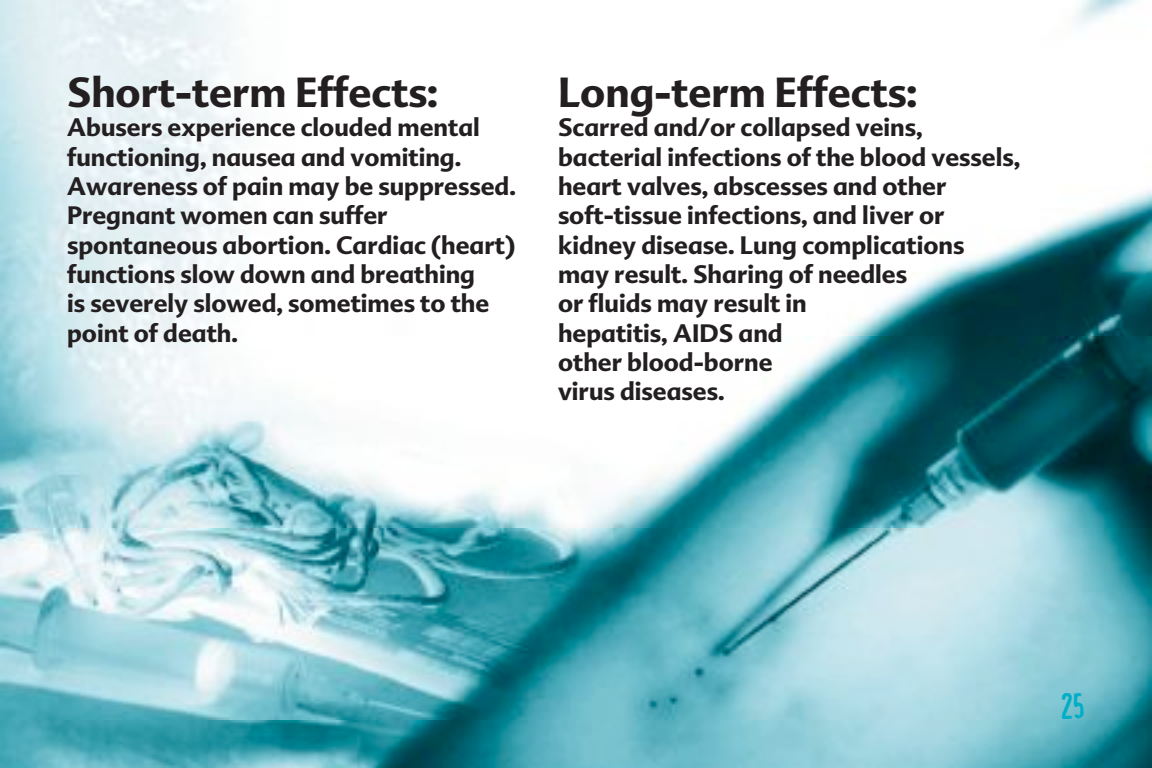
Injecting the drug can create a risk of AIDS, hepatitis (liver disease) and other diseases caused by infected needles. These health problems can be passed on to sexual partners and newborns. Heroin is one of the three drugs most frequently involved in drug abuse deaths. Violence and crime are linked to its use.

Short-term Effects:

Abusers experience clouded mental functioning, nausea and vomiting. Awareness of pain may be suppressed. Pregnant women can suffer spontaneous abortion. Cardiac (heart) functions slow down and breathing is severely slowed, sometimes to the point of death.

Long-term Effects:

Scarred and/or collapsed veins, bacterial infections of the blood vessels, heart valves, abscesses and other soft-tissue infections, and liver or kidney disease. Lung complications may result. Sharing of needles or fluids may result in hepatitis, AIDS and other blood-borne virus diseases.



LSD

Street Names:

- Acid
- Cid
- Blotter
- Heavenly Blue
- Microdot
- Purple Heart
- California Sunshine
- Tab
- Dots

LSD is sold in tablets, capsules or in liquid form. It is commonly added to absorbent paper and divided into small decorated squares. Each square is a dose.

LSD is still one of the most potent mood-changing chemicals and is derived from the extremely poisonous ergot fungus, a mold which grows on rye and other grains. Its effects are unpredictable. A tiny amount can produce 12 hours or more of effects.

Short-term Effects:

Dilated pupils, higher body temperature, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, dry mouth and tremors. People can experience severe, terrifying thoughts and feelings, fear of losing control, fear of insanity and death and feelings of despair while using LSD.

Long-term Effects:

Flashbacks, or recurrences, of an LSD "trip" can be experienced long after the drug is taken and its effect has apparently worn off. The "trip" itself usually begins to clear up after about 12 hours, but some users manifest long-lasting psychoses.

Prescription Drug Abuse

Abuse of prescription drugs has become a more serious problem than most street drugs. Painkillers, tranquillisers, antidepressants, sleeping pills and stimulants may appear "safe" due to being prescribed by doctors, but they can be just as addictive and potent as the heroin or cocaine sold on the street. The painkiller OxyContin, for example, is as powerful as heroin and affects the body in the same way. Continued use of painkillers, depressants ("downers"), stimulants ("uppers") or antidepressants can lead to addiction—and painful withdrawal symptoms for those who try to quit.

Just a few of the effects of these drugs are given here.

Painkillers: OxyContin, Fentanyl, morphine, Percodan, Demerol are a few of a long list of painkillers. Effects can include slowed breathing, nausea and unconsciousness. Abuse can lead to addiction.

Depressants: These drugs, which slow down your brain and nervous system functions, include Xanax, Zyprexa, Amytal, Seconal, Valium and many others. Effects can include heart problems, weight gain, fatigue* and slurred speech. Continued use can lead to addiction.

Stimulants: These drugs speed up your heart rate and breathing, similar to "speed" or cocaine. They include Ritalin, Adderall, Concerta and drugs known as "bennies." Effects include increased blood pressure and heartbeat, hostility and paranoia.

Antidepressants: Prozac, Aropax, Zoloft and Celexa are some of the commonly used antidepressants. Effects can include irregular heartbeat, paranoid reactions, violent or suicidal thoughts and hallucinations. Long-term use can lead to addiction.

Painkillers, depressants and antidepressants are responsible for more overdose deaths in the US than cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and amphetamines combined.

* fatigue: extreme physical or mental tiredness.

What Dealers Will Tell You

When teens were surveyed to find out why they started using drugs in the first place, 55% replied that it was due to pressure from their friends. They wanted to be cool and popular. Dealers know this.

They will approach you as a friend and offer to "help you out" with "something to bring you up." The drug will "help you fit in" or "make you cool."

Drug dealers, motivated by the profits they make, will say anything to get you to buy their drugs.

They will tell you that "cocaine will make your life a party" and that "heroin is a warm blanket." If you take Ecstasy, "you can be with a lot of girls."

They don't care if the drugs ruin your life as long as they are getting paid. All they care about is money. Former dealers have admitted they saw their buyers as "pawns in a chess game."

Get the facts about drugs. Make your own decisions.

Millions of copies of booklets such as this have been distributed to people around the world in 22 languages. As new drugs appear on the streets and more information about their effects becomes known, existing booklets are updated and new ones created.

In Australia the campaign is coordinated by Drug-Free Ambassadors Australia, a recognised charity with the Department of Family and Community Services' Harm Prevention Register.

The booklets are published by the Foundation for a Drug-Free World, a nonprofit public benefit organisation headquartered in Los Angeles, California.

The Foundation provides educational materials, advice and coordination for an international drug prevention network. The Foundation and Drug-Free Ambassadors Australia work with youth, parents, educators, volunteer organisations and government agencies—anyone with an interest in helping people lead lives free from drug abuse.

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FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

This booklet is one in a series of publications that cover the facts about marijuana, alcohol, Ecstasy, cocaine, crack cocaine, crystal meth and methamphetamine, inhalants, heroin, LSD and prescription drug abuse. Armed with this information, the reader can make the decision to live a drug-free life.

For more information or to obtain more copies of this or other booklets in this series, contact:

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