
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

You hear a lot of talk about drugs these days—at school, in the streets, on the internet and TV. Some of it is true, some not.

What you may not know is that much of what you hear about drugs actually comes from those selling them. Former dealers have said they would tell people anything to get them to buy drugs.

You need the real facts and the truth about drugs so you can make an informed decision about them. That is why we have prepared this booklet—for you.

Your feedback is important to us, so let us know what you think about this booklet. Visit us at **DrugFreeWorld.org** and email us at **info@drugfreeworld.org**.

Our Drug Culture

Drugs have been part of our culture since the mid-20th century. They became popular in the 1960s through music and mass media, spreading into many parts of society.

Around 296 million people worldwide use illegal drugs. In the United States, results from a national survey showed that 61 million Americans (or 22 percent of the population aged 12 and older) used illegal drugs in the year before the survey.

Chances are, you probably know someone who has been affected by drugs, directly or indirectly.



The most commonly used—and abused—drug in the US is alcohol. Of nearly 3,000 teens killed in traffic accidents, about 1 in 5 had been drinking.

Another one of the most commonly used drugs is marijuana. According to the United Nations World Drug Report, nearly 4 percent of the world's population between the ages of 15 and 64 abuse marijuana.

Young people today are exposed to drugs earlier than ever. Based on the Monitoring the Future survey, about 62 percent of high school seniors nationwide drank alcohol and 38 percent have smoked pot.

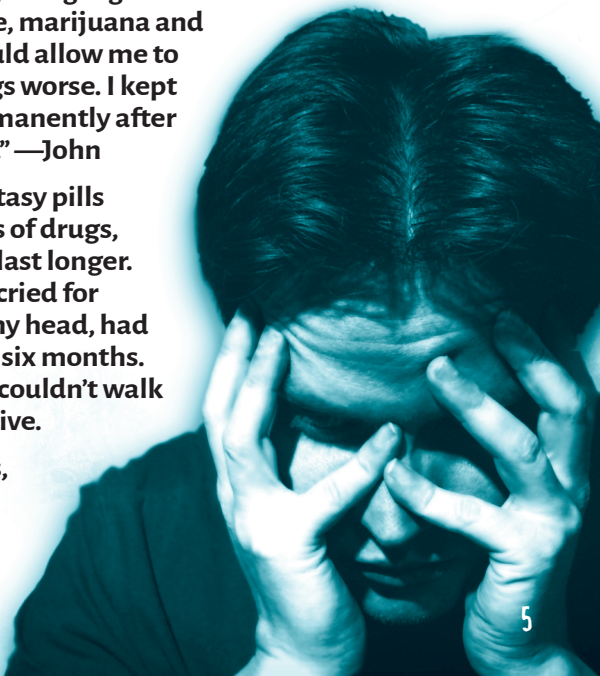
In Europe, recent studies among 15- and 16-year-olds show that an average of 16 percent used marijuana at least once, and more than 7 percent used it in the last month. The highest rates were reported by teens in Czechia (29 percent), followed by Italy (28 percent) and Latvia (27 percent).



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 Ecstasy pills 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 in 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, drugs become the problem.

Difficult as it may be to face personal problems, the consequences of drug use are always worse than the problems a person is trying to solve by taking drugs. The real answer is to get the facts—and to not 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 risk: 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 along with the undesirable. So, while they might give short-term pain relief, they also take away a person's alertness, skill and ability to think clearly.

Medicines are drugs that are intended to speed up, slow down or change how your body works to help it function better. Sometimes medicines are necessary. But they are still drugs: they can act as stimulants or sedatives, and too much can kill you. If not used as directed, medicines can be as dangerous as illegal drugs.

Drugs Affect the Mind

Normally, when a person remembers something, the mind works very fast and information comes to them quickly. But drugs blur memory, causing blank spots. When a person tries to recall information through this cloudy mess, they can't do it. Drugs make a person feel slow or stupid and lead to failures in life. As life gets harder and they experience more failures, they want more drugs to help deal with the problem.

Drugs Destroy Creativity

One lie told about drugs is that they help make a person more creative. The truth is actually the opposite.

Someone might think using drugs will give them creative ideas. But that's not how drugs work. Drugs may give a person a false sense of creative freedom but, when the drug wears off, the person crashes. And each time, the emotional plunge is lower and lower. Eventually, drugs will completely destroy all the creativity a person has.



The facts about commonly abused drugs come from multiple sources. Here we provide you with the truth about what these drugs are and what they do.

- Marijuana ..... Page 10
- Alcohol ..... Page 12
- Fentanyl ..... Page 14
- Synthetic Drugs ..... Page 16
- Ecstasy ..... Page 18
- Cocaine & Crack Cocaine ..... Page 20
- Crystal Meth & Methamphetamine ..... Page 22
- Inhalants ..... Page 24
- Heroin ..... Page 26
- LSD ..... Page 28
- Prescription Drug Abuse ..... Page 30

Marijuana

Marijuana is often rolled into a cigarette called a *joint*. It can also be brewed as tea, mixed with sodas or food, or smoked through a water pipe called a *bong*. Brownies, cookies and candy are common forms of marijuana edibles. Many edible products look like regular candy or snacks that kids recognize, which can create the impression that they are harmless.

Street Names:

- **Buds**
- **Dagga**
- **Dope**
- **420**
- **Ganja**
- **Grass**
- **Herb**
- **Home Grown**
- **J**
- **Mary Jane**
- **Pot**
- **Reefer**
- **Skunk**
- **Trees**
- **Weed**

Marijuana is one of the most abused drugs. Today, it is often more potent than it used to be. New growing techniques and selective breeding have produced strains with much higher THC* levels, the primary ingredient that causes intoxication. Because of this, there has been a sharp increase in marijuana-related emergency room visits among young users.

According to the World Health Organization, 200 million people worldwide use marijuana each year. In the United States, marijuana is the most commonly used psychotropic drug (a drug that affects mental state) after alcohol, with nearly 12 million young adults reporting

* THC: the chemical in cannabis responsible for its mind-altering effects

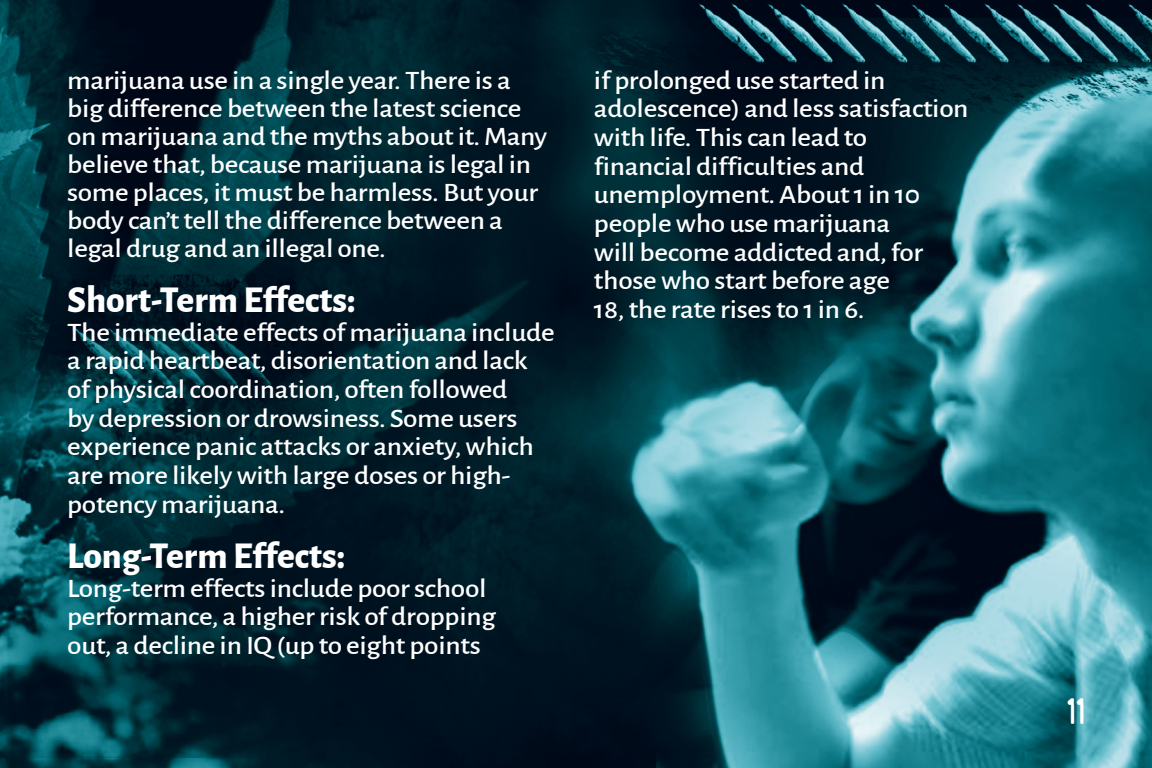
marijuana use in a single year. There is a big difference between the latest science on marijuana and the myths about it. Many believe that, because marijuana is legal in some places, it must be harmless. But your body can't tell the difference between a legal drug and an illegal one.

Short-Term Effects:

The immediate effects of marijuana include a rapid heartbeat, disorientation and lack of physical coordination, often followed by depression or drowsiness. Some users experience panic attacks or anxiety, which are more likely with large doses or high-potency marijuana.

Long-Term Effects:

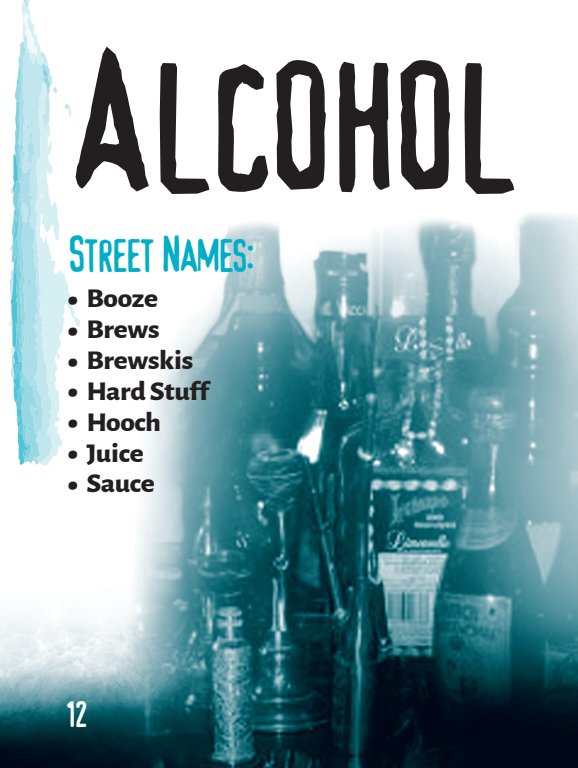
Long-term effects include poor school performance, a higher risk of dropping out, a decline in IQ (up to eight points if prolonged use started in adolescence) and less satisfaction with life. This can lead to financial difficulties and unemployment. About 1 in 10 people who use marijuana will become addicted and, for those who start before age 18, the rate rises to 1 in 6.



Alcohol

Street Names:

- **Booze**
- **Brews**
- **Brewskis**
- **Hard Stuff**
- **Hooch**
- **Juice**
- **Sauce**



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 from alcohol poisoning. Mixing alcohol with medications or street drugs is extremely dangerous and can also be fatal.

Alcohol affects every system in the body, leading to loss of coordination, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses and blackouts. Drinking can interfere with one's normal growth and development in the teenage years, as well as mental and emotional well-being. Among all 15- to 18-year-old drivers involved in fatal crashes in one year, more than 1 in 5 had been drinking.

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

Short-Term Effects:

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

Long-Term Effects:

Increased tolerance of alcohol leads to drinking more. This can cause serious physical problems, including liver damage, heart disease and an increased risk of cancer. A pregnant woman who drinks alcohol may give birth to a baby with defects affecting the baby's heart, brain and other major organs. The child can also grow up with serious learning disabilities, vision or hearing problems and much more.



Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a very powerful opioid drug that has long been used in medical procedures.

Medical fentanyl is sometimes diverted and sold illegally. It can take the form of skin patches, injectable liquids or slow-release lozenges. Just two milligrams of fentanyl can be fatal for a person not accustomed to using opioids.

Illegal fentanyl is found as a white powder or in fake pills that look like other medications. Fentanyl is sometimes mixed with other illegal drugs, such as heroin, cocaine or methamphetamine. Drug traffickers often press fentanyl into counterfeit pills, any one of which could contain a deadly dose of fentanyl.

Street Names:

- **Apache**
- **China Girl**
- **Dance Fever**
- **Drop Dead**
- **Fetty**
- **Jackpot**
- **Lethal Injection**
- **Murder 8**
- **Poison**
- **Tango & Cash**

In recent years, fentanyl manufactured by criminals has flooded the market, causing tens of thousands of overdose deaths each year.

Short-Term Effects:

Users experience sedation, confusion, dizziness, nausea, tiny pupils, vomiting and constipation. The drug severely affects the lungs, slowing breathing, which can lead to death if too much of the drug is consumed.

Long-Term Effects:

Those who inject fentanyl can suffer collapsed veins or bacterial infections of the skin and heart. Fentanyl misuse strains the heart and can cause congestive heart failure and irregular heartbeat. Of course, the worst long-term effects are addiction and a very real risk of overdose death.

I went down to her room and opened up the door and I found her. She was standing upright, but she was bent over, down with her head on the couch arm and a pile of vomit. When I picked her up, her eyes were open, and I knew she was dead."
—Mother



Synthetic Drugs

Street Names:

- **Bath Salts**
- **Black Mamba**
- **Blizzard**
- **Fake Weed**
- **K2**
- **N-bomb**
- **Smiles**
- **Spice**

Synthetic drugs are made in a laboratory using man-made chemicals. The most common types of synthetics imitate drugs that are often abused: marijuana, stimulants, tranquilizers and opioids. The number of synthetics, or "designer drugs," on the illicit market is always changing.

Synthetics became popular because drug traffickers and dealers could claim that they were selling "legal" substances. Drug users do not know what is in the synthetic drug they just bought, how it will affect them or what harmful substances it may contain.





Short-Term Effects:

Hallucinations and delusions, confusion and disorientation, psychosis, suicidal thoughts or suicide, extreme agitation and anxiety, panic attacks, depression, insomnia, violent behavior, difficulty breathing, unresponsiveness, loss of consciousness, headaches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, heavy sweating, high fever, kidney problems, heart attack and bleeding in the brain.

Long-Term Effects:

Kidney damage and failure, liver damage, seizures, brain swelling, brain death, tremors, extreme tiredness, insomnia, memory loss and confusion, paralysis, severe and lasting anxiety and depression, gangrene that may require amputations and death.

Ecstasy

Street Names:

- Adam
- Beans
- Clarity
- E
- Hug
- Love Pill
- Lover's Speed
- Molly
- Scooby Snacks
- X
- XTC



Ecstasy is a drug that is manufactured in laboratories. Pure Ecstasy is a chemical called *MDMA*, but manufacturers often add other drugs to their pills, such as caffeine, amphetamine* and even cocaine. Ecstasy is usually taken by mouth in the form of a pill, tablet or capsule. Taking more than one at a time is called *bumping*. Ecstasy pills come in different colors and sometimes have cartoonlike images on them.

Ecstasy has both hallucinogenic and stimulating effects. The stimulating effects may drive the user to dance for long periods of time at musical events known as *raves*. But using Ecstasy in hot, crowded conditions found at indoor or outdoor raves can lead to extreme dehydration and overheating, which may cause organ failure and even death. Mixing Ecstasy with alcohol is extremely dangerous and can be lethal.

* amphetamine: a central nervous system stimulant, often called *speed*

Short-Term Effects:

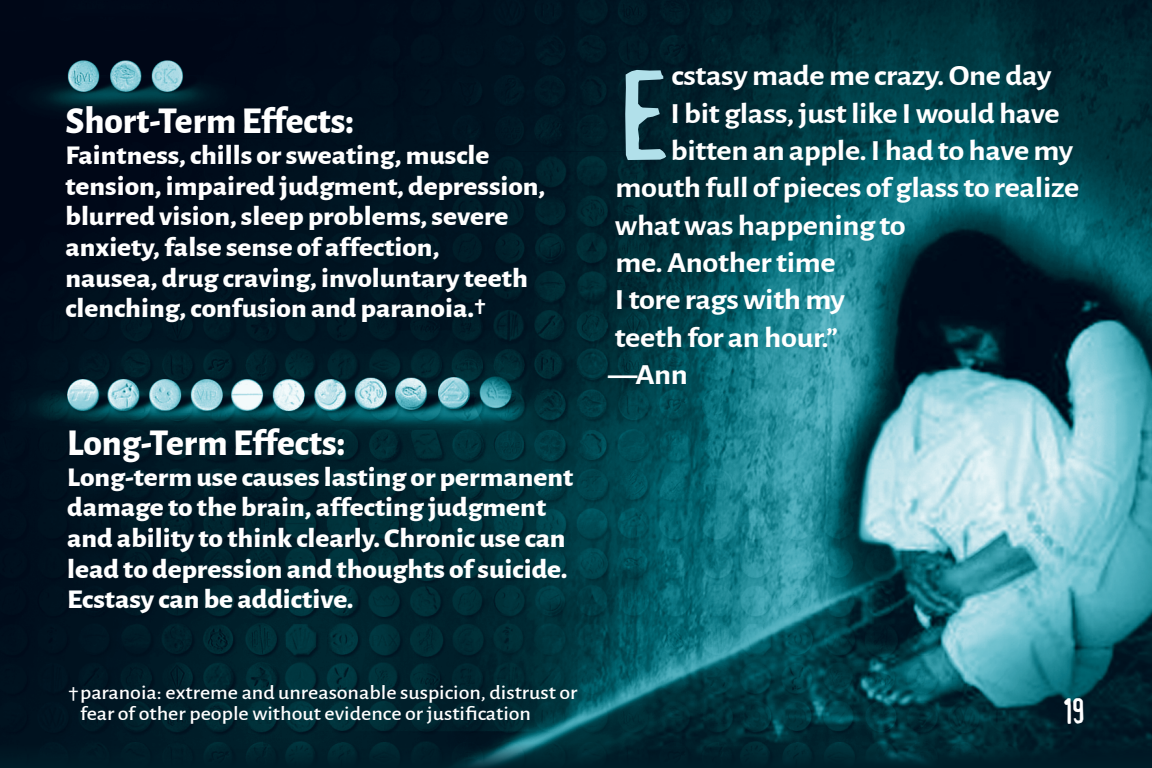
Faintness, chills or sweating, muscle tension, impaired judgment, depression, blurred vision, sleep problems, severe anxiety, false sense of affection, nausea, drug craving, involuntary teeth clenching, confusion and paranoia.†

Long-Term Effects:

Long-term use causes lasting or permanent damage to the brain, affecting judgment and ability to think clearly. Chronic use can lead to depression and thoughts of suicide. Ecstasy can be addictive.

†paranoia: extreme and unreasonable suspicion, distrust or fear of other people without evidence or justification

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 is a powdered drug that can be taken orally or snorted through the nose. To ingest the drug more quickly, it is sometimes dissolved and injected with a syringe, which greatly increases the risk of overdose. Crack cocaine is made by processing powdered cocaine with water, baking soda or ammonia to create small, hard rocks. It is smoked to provide a fast, immediate high.

Street Names:

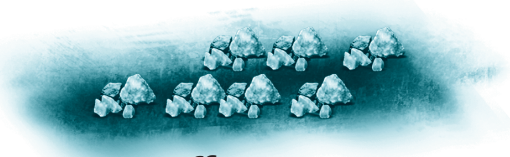
- **Charlie**
- **Coke**
- **Crack**
- **Flake**
- **Rocks**
- **Sniff**
- **Snow**

Cocaine is refined from the leaves of the coca plant. Stimulant drugs like cocaine can quickly lead to psychological and physical dependence.



Short-Term Effects:

Cocaine causes a brief, 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 may have a very fast heart rate, muscle spasms and convulsions. The drug can make people feel paranoid, angry, hostile and anxious, even when they aren't high.



Long-Term Effects:

After extended use, cocaine can lead to irritability, mood problems, restlessness, paranoia and auditory (hearing) hallucinations. People develop a tolerance for the drug, meaning they need more to get high. Chronic use can also cause nerve damage, stroke and muscle breakdown.

Coming down from cocaine causes severe depression, which becomes worse with each use. This depression can get so severe that a person will do almost anything to get the drug—even commit murder. If they can't get cocaine, the depression can get so intense it can drive the addict to suicide.

Crystal Meth & Methamphetamine

Crystal meth and methamphetamine can be used by snorting, swallowing, smoking or injecting it. It may be sold in powder or pill form or as jagged crystals.

Crystal meth is a type of methamphetamine that looks like small pieces of glass or shiny blue-white rocks. It is a highly powerful and addictive man-made stimulant that causes aggression and violent or psychotic behavior. Many users report becoming addicted the first time they use it. It is one of the hardest addictions to overcome.

Street Names:

- **Crank**
- **Crystal**
- **Glass**
- **Go-fast**
- **Ice**
- **Quartz**
- **Speed**
- **Tina**
- **Tweak**

Short-Term Effects:

Disturbed sleep patterns, hyperactivity, nausea, delusions of power, increased aggressiveness and irritability. Can cause decreased appetite, which may lead to extreme weight loss. High doses can create an intense 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, irregular heartbeat, heart or blood vessel collapse, death. Meth can also cause liver, kidney and lung damage. Users may suffer from brain damage, depression and memory impairment.



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 that 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:

- **Laughing Gas**
- **Poppers**
- **Rush**
- **Snappers**
- **Whippets**

Inhalants are common chemicals found in products like aerosol sprays, cleaning fluids, glue, paint, paint thinner, markers, nail polish remover, amyl nitrite* and lighter fuel. They are sniffed or inhaled (called *huffing*). There are hundreds of these chemicals present in most homes, offices or home improvement stores.

Inhalants have serious effects on the brain. When these fumes are inhaled through the nose or mouth, they can cause permanent physical and mental damage. The chemicals take the place of oxygen in the lungs, leading to oxygen starvation and even suffocation. This makes the heart beat faster and irregularly, which can lead to sudden heart failure.



* amyl nitrite: a pale yellow chemical used to medically widen blood vessels and in the manufacture of some dyes and explosives, sometimes abused as a stimulant

People who use inhalants can lose their sense of smell, suffer from nausea and nosebleeds and 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. Some people become addicted to using inhalants.

Short-Term Effects:

Confusion, slurred speech, lack of coordination, dizziness and euphoria. The user may be drowsy and lightheaded and experience headaches, hallucinations and delusions. Someone on inhalants may also suddenly react with extreme violence.

Long-Term Effects:

Liver, bone marrow and kidney damage, muscle spasms resulting from nerve damage, muscle wasting, reduced muscle tone and strength. Permanent brain damage can cause problems with thinking, vision, hearing and movement.



HEROIN



STREET NAMES:

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

Heroin, like opium and morphine, is made from the resin of poppy plants. It is usually taken by injecting, snorting or smoking it. Heroin has a tranquilizing and painkilling effect. The user feels a rush of euphoria, followed by drowsiness and sedation.

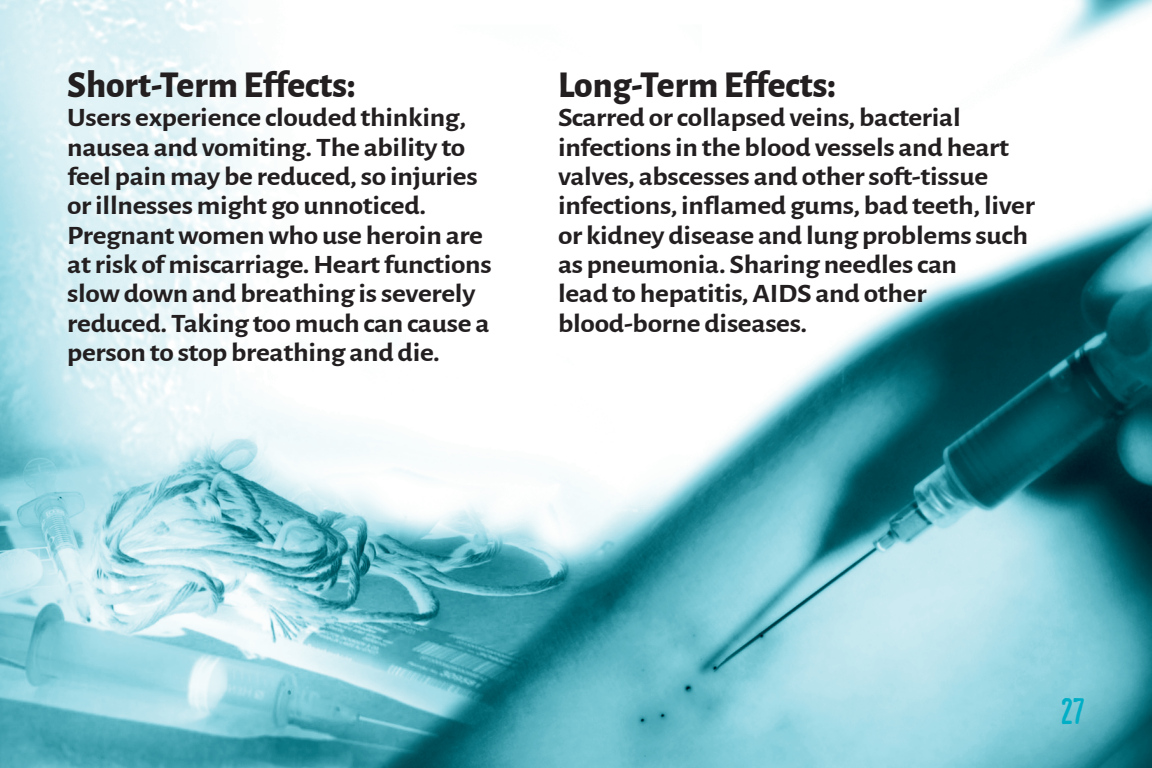
Breathing slows and there's a warm flushing of the skin. For many people, it becomes addictive very quickly. Injecting the drug can create a risk of AIDS, hepatitis (liver disease), heart infections and other problems caused by sharing contaminated needles. Some of these health problems can be passed on to sexual partners and newborns. Violence and crime are frequently linked to heroin use.

Short-Term Effects:

Users experience clouded thinking, nausea and vomiting. The ability to feel pain may be reduced, so injuries or illnesses might go unnoticed. Pregnant women who use heroin are at risk of miscarriage. Heart functions slow down and breathing is severely reduced. Taking too much can cause a person to stop breathing and die.

Long-Term Effects:

Scarred or collapsed veins, bacterial infections in the blood vessels and heart valves, abscesses and other soft-tissue infections, inflamed gums, bad teeth, liver or kidney disease and lung problems such as pneumonia. Sharing needles can lead to hepatitis, AIDS and other blood-borne diseases.



LSD

Street Names:

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

LSD is sold in tablets, capsules or liquid form. It is also frequently soaked into absorbent paper and divided into small, decorated squares called *blotters*.

LSD is one of the most potent mood-changing chemicals. It is derived from the extremely poisonous ergot fungus, a mold which grows on rye and other grains. LSD users refer to the drug's effects as a *trip*. An LSD trip is unpredictable and can cause severe mental effects lasting 12 hours or more.



Short-Term Effects:



Dilated pupils, higher body temperature, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, dry mouth and tremors. Hallucinations and distortions of time, space, colors, sounds and body image. Some people experience terrifying thoughts and feelings, fear of losing control, fear of insanity, fear of death and feelings of despair.



Long-Term Effects:

Flashbacks, or recurrences of an LSD trip, can happen long after the drug is taken and its effect has apparently worn off. These flashbacks can occur even months or years later. Some users develop long-lasting psychoses.

Prescription Drug Abuse

Painkillers, tranquilizers, antidepressants, sleeping pills and stimulants may seem "safe" because they are prescribed by doctors, but they can be just as addictive and dangerous as drugs 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 when trying to quit.

It is important to note that any pill sold illegally, no matter how authentic it looks, could have been produced by drug traffickers who may have added a deadly dose of fentanyl. In one year, more than 80 million fake pills laced with fentanyl were seized in the USA. Seven out of 10 of these pills contained enough fentanyl to kill a person. Just some of the effects of these drugs are listed here.

Painkillers: OxyContin, fentanyl, morphine, Percodan and 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 brain and nervous system activity, include Xanax, Zyprexa, 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 heart rate and breathing, similar to methamphetamine or cocaine. Examples include "study drugs" like Ritalin, Adderall, Concerta and drugs known as *bennies*. Effects include increased blood pressure and heartbeat, hostility and paranoia.

Antidepressants: Common examples include Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft and Celexa. Effects can include irregular heartbeat, paranoid reactions, violent or suicidal thoughts and hallucinations. Long-term use can lead to addiction.

* 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 percent 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 money 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 like 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 get paid. All they care about is money. Former dealers admit they viewed 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 over 20 languages.

As new drugs appear on the streets and more information about their effects becomes known, existing booklets are updated and new ones created.

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

The foundation provides educational materials, advice and coordination for its international drug prevention network. It works with youth, parents, educators, volunteer organizations and government agencies—anyone with an interest in helping people lead lives free from drug abuse.

REFERENCES:

For the references used to compile this booklet, go to DrugFreeWorld.org/refs.

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FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

This booklet is one in a series of publications that covers the facts about marijuana, alcohol, fentanyl, synthetic drugs, 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.

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Foundation for a Drug-Free World
DrugFreeWorld.org • info@drugfreeworld.org
1 (888) 668-6378 • 1 (818) 952-5260

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