

ALCOHOL FACT SHEET



WHAT IS ALCOHOL?

Alcohol is a depressant drug, which means it slows down the messages travelling between the brain and the body.

HANGOVERS

The following day, you may have a hangover, which is:

- Headache
- Diarrhoea and nausea
- Tiredness and trembling
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Dry mouth
- Trouble concentrating
- Anxiety
- Poor or decreased sleep

SOBERING UP

To sober up takes time. The liver gets rid of about one standard drink an hour. Sweating it out with exercise, cold showers, coffee, fresh air or vomiting will not speed up the process. They may ease the symptoms, but they do not remove alcohol from the bloodstream any faster. This means it may not be safe to drive or work the following day.

EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. It's important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

Alcohol affects everyone differently, based on:

- Size, weight and health
- Whether the person is used to taking it
- Whether other drugs are taken around the same time
- The amount drunk
- The strength of the drink

You may experience:

- Feeling relaxed
- Trouble concentrating
- Slower reflexes
- Increased confidence
- Feeling happier or sadder, depending on your mood

If you consume a lot of alcohol, you might experience:

- Confusion
- Blurred vision
- Clumsiness
- Memory loss
- Nausea, vomiting
- Passing out
- Coma
- Death

LONG TERM EFFECTS

Regular use of alcohol may eventually cause:

- Depression
- Poor memory and brain damage
- Difficulty having children
- Liver disease
- Cancer
- High blood pressure and heart disease
- Needing to drink more to get the same effect
- Physical dependence on alcohol

DRINKING ALCOHOL WITH OTHER DRUGS

The effects of drinking and taking other drugs, including over-the-counter or prescribed medications, can be unpredictable and dangerous, and could cause:

Alcohol + Cannabis = nausea, vomiting, panic, anxiety and paranoia

Alcohol + Energy Drinks (with caffeine) = more risky behaviour, body under great stress, overdose more likely

Alcohol + Speed or Ecstasy = more risky behaviour, body under great stress, overdose more likely

Alcohol + Benzodiazepines = decreased heart rate, overdose more likely

Alcohol + GHB = decreased heart rate, overdose more likely

FASD: THE FACTS

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe impacts on the brain and body of individuals prenatally exposed to alcohol during pregnancy

- **No amount of alcohol use is known to be safe for a developing baby before birth.** Any amount of alcohol, even if it's just one glass of wine, passes from the mother to the baby. It makes no difference if the alcohol is wine, beer, or liquor (vodka, rum, tequila, etc.)
- **A developing baby can't process alcohol.** Developing babies lack the ability to process alcohol with their liver, which is not fully formed. They absorb all of the alcohol and have the same blood alcohol content as the mother.
- **Alcohol causes more harm than heroin or cocaine during pregnancy.** The Institute of Medicine says, 'Of all the substances of abuse (including cocaine, heroin, and marijuana), alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioral effects in the foetus'.
- **FASDs can occur in an individual who was exposed to alcohol before birth.** An estimated 40,000 newborns each year are affected by FAS, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, or have FASD, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, with damage ranging from major to subtle.
- **Alcohol use during pregnancy is the leading preventable cause of birth defects, developmental disabilities, and learning disabilities.**



WITHDRAWAL

Giving up alcohol after drinking it for a long time is challenging because the body has to get used to functioning without it.

Withdrawal symptoms can start within a few hours after the last drinks and can last for 2–7 days.

These symptoms can include:

- Sweating
- Tremors
- Nausea
- Anxiety, irritability, difficulty sleeping
- Seizures or fits
- Delusions and hallucinations
- Death

CANNABIS FACT SHEET



WHAT IS CANNABIS?

Cannabis is classified as a cannabinoid drug. The exact number of different cannabinoids in the cannabis sativa plant is still being researched, but it primarily contains the psychoactive cannabinoid THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) and the non-psychoactive cannabidiol (CBD).

OTHER NAMES

Marijuana, Pot, Weed, Hash, Dope, Ganja, Joint, Chronic, Spliff, Mary Jane. Bud, Zoot

MEDICINAL CANNABIS

Medicinal cannabis is cannabis prescribed to relieve the symptoms of a medical condition, such as epilepsy. It is a quality-controlled product with labelled levels of cannabinoids such as THC and CBD.



HOW IS CANNABIS USED?

Cannabis can be smoked, eaten or vaporized and comes in different forms. Users report that the subjective effects of cannabis vary significantly depending on the form consumed.

Marijuana – the dried leaves and flowers (buds) of the cannabis plant that are smoked in a joint or a bong. This is the most common form.

Hashish – the dried plant resin that is usually mixed with tobacco and smoked or added to foods and baked; such as cookies and brownies.

Hash oil – liquid that is usually used sparingly (due to high potency) and added to the tip of a joint or cigarette and smoked.

Cannabis can be prepared into various foods generally called 'edibles'. It takes between 1–3 hours to feel the effects after eating cannabis. Impatient or naïve users may believe they have not taken enough to feel the effects, and if they consume more they may find later that the psychoactive effects are unpleasantly strong. When edible products have inconsistent levels of THC even experienced users may find it difficult to regulate the amount consumed.

When smoked or vaporized, the effects are usually felt straight away. There are health concerns about the impact of smoking, especially in the long term, especially if mixed with tobacco.

CANNABIS AND THE LAW

Cannabis is a Class B Drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Although it is given the title of a 'controlled substance' there is actually very little control that anyone has over it. The commercial market is completely illicit leaving the main share controlled by organised crime and completely unregulated. There is no control over who produces it, who sells it, who it is sold to, or even that the quality of the product is safe to consume.

Under the Misuse of Drugs Act, it is an offence:

- to unlawfully possess a controlled drug
- to possess a controlled drug with intent to supply it
- to unlawfully supply (sell/give/share) a controlled drug
- to allow premises you occupy or manage to be used for the smoking or use of drugs

EFFECTS OF CANNABIS

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. It's important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

Cannabis affects every individual differently. Even the same person may have a different experience on separate occasions or over the course of their life. Some of the factors that influence these differences appear to be:

- Size, weight and health
- Whether the person is used to taking it
- Whether other drugs are taken around the same time
- The amount and strength
- Expectations of consuming cannabis
- The environment of the individual
- The individual's personality

The effects of cannabis vary between people, and may even be different for the same person at different times. Some people report feelings of relaxation and euphoria while other people report experiences of anxiety and paranoia.

The effects of cannabis may be felt immediately if smoked, or within an hour or two if eaten and effects may include:

- Feelings of relaxation and euphoria
- Spontaneous laughter and excitement
- Increased sociability
- Increased appetite
- Dry mouth

If a large amount, strong batch, or concentrated form is consumed, you may be more likely to also experience:

- Memory impairment
- Slower reflexes
- Bloodshot eyes
- Increased heart rate
- Mild anxiety and paranoia

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Long-term effects are dependent on how much and how often the cannabis is consumed and may also be affected by how the cannabis is consumed (e.g. vaporising a concentrate versus smoking the flower). Heavy, regular use of cannabis may eventually cause:

- Tolerance to the effects of cannabis
- Dependence on cannabis
- Reduced cognitive functioning
- Sore throat
- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- and if smoked with tobacco, then cancer

Those with a family history of mental illness are more likely to also experience anxiety, depression and psychotic symptoms after using cannabis. Psychotic symptoms include delusions, hallucinations and seeing or hearing things that do not exist or are distorted.

WITHDRAWAL

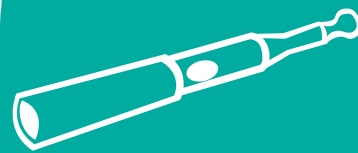
Giving up cannabis after regular, heavy use over a long time is challenging, because the body has to get used to functioning without it. Withdrawal symptoms may last for only a week, but sleep may be affected for longer.

Symptoms include:

- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Loss of appetite and upset stomach
- Restless sleep and nightmares



E-CIGARETTE FACT SHEET



WHAT ARE E-CIGARETTES?

E-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that resemble tobacco cigarettes, cigars or pipes except that they do not contain tobacco. The device allows users to inhale nicotine and other chemicals in a vapour form rather than smoke. There are also a number of non-nicotine devices that contain a variety of ingredients and flavours like fruit, sweets, coffee or alcohol flavours.

HOW ARE THEY USED?

E-cigarettes contain nicotine solution, flavour and other chemicals in a disposable cartridge that can be replaced or refilled. E-cigarettes use heat to transform nicotine solution into vapour which is inhaled.

People may use e-cigarettes for various reasons including:

- To help them reduce or quit smoking
- To avoid disturbing other people with smoke
- In smoke-free places
- To cough less, improve their breathing or physical fitness
- For the flavour or sensation of inhalation

DO THEY HELP PEOPLE QUIT SMOKING?

As yet, there is very little available research that indicates if e-cigarettes can help people quit smoking as the results of studies on individual brands vary.

While it has been suggested e-cigarettes may offer a safer alternative to smoking, other research points to a potential rise in smoking rates by re-normalising smoking, reducing a smoker's motivation to quit or indirectly encouraging non-smokers to take up the habit.

There is also the risk that smokers may become dual users of both e-cigarettes and tobacco cigarettes.

ARE E-CIGARETTES SAFER THAN TRADITIONAL CIGARETTES?

Research into health risks associated with smoking e-cigarettes is extremely limited. However, there are known risks associated with nicotine exposure on brain development meaning that pregnant women and adolescents should avoid smoking them. They should also not be smoked around children. There are also risks linked to nicotine poisoning via ingestion and skin contact.

Concerns have been raised about the appeal of flavoured e-cigarettes among

children and adolescence, in countries where data is available concerning trends are being noted in the uptake of e-cigarettes in adolescence and children.

While it is thought that e-cigarettes may pose less harm than conventional cigarettes because they do not contain tobacco, significant differences in product designs and individual smoking patterns make it difficult to determine the potential level of nicotine toxicity in e-cigarettes. Manufacturer quality is not guaranteed, and can be highly variable. Nicotine labelling on e-cigarettes and e-liquids has also been demonstrated to be inconsistent. Labels have also incorrectly denied the presence of nicotine and other potentially toxic chemicals.

ARE E-CIGARETTES SAFER THAN TRADITIONAL CIGARETTES? (CONT'D)

There are safety concerns from prolonged exposure if smokers inhale vapour many times a day for many months.

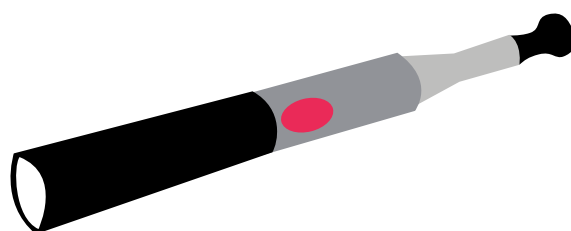
Some e-cigarettes contain propylene glycol and glycerol (purified vegetable glycerine) that are potentially toxic and may cause mouth and throat irritation. Some e-cigarette manufacturers now use distilled water and glycerine instead of propylene glycol vapour in an attempt to address such safety concerns. E-cigarettes may also contain toxins such as formaldehyde and heavy metals, such as chromium, aluminium, arsenic, copper, lead, nickel and tin, all of which cause adverse health effects, including cancer. In some cases, these metals have

been detected at levels similar to, or greater than those found in tobacco.

Over 200 cases have been reported in the US and UK of e-cigarettes overheating, catching fire or exploding, causing serious and in some cases life threatening injury, disability and disfigurement.

While the risks of passive smoke to bystanders are considered to be lower with e-cigarettes than conventional cigarettes. Studies have demonstrated that e-cigarettes expose both users and bystanders to particles that can cause adverse health effects, especially to those who have existing chronic disease.

The World Health Organisation has warned that any level of exposure to these particles may be harmful and should be reduced. Exposure to heavy metals such as nickel and silver may be greater than in conventional cigarettes.





WHAT IS NICOTINE?

Products such as cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco, and wet and dry snuff and the dried leaves from the tobacco plant all contain nicotine.

Nicotine is a stimulant drug that speeds up the messages travelling between the brain and body. It may be more addictive than heroin. Tar and carbon monoxide (a toxic gas) are also released when tobacco is burned, such as when it's smoked. Nicotine, as it occurs in tobacco has no therapeutic or medical use but small doses have been used to treat nicotine dependence.

HOW IS NICOTINE USED?

Tobacco which contains nicotine is usually smoked in cigarettes. It is also smoked in cigars and pipes.

EFFECTS OF NICOTINE

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. It's important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

Nicotine affects everyone differently, based on:

- Size, weight and health
- Whether the person is used to taking it
- Whether other drugs are taken around the same time
- The amount taken
- The strength of the tobacco and how much is contained in the product

The following effects may be experienced:

- Mild stimulation
- Coughing
- Dizziness, headaches
- Increase in heart rate
- Bad breath
- Tingling and numbness in fingers and toes
- Reduced appetite, stomach cramps and vomiting

Some people believe that smoking 'light' or 'low tar' cigarettes is less harmful than regular cigarettes. However, there is little difference between the amount of chemicals inhaled by people who smoke 'light' cigarettes and those who smoke regular ones.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Regular use of nicotine may eventually cause:

- Shortness of breath
- Coughing fits, asthma and lung diseases
- Regular colds or flu
- Loss of taste and smell
- Yellow, rotting teeth
- Yellow finger tips
- Early wrinkles
- Back pain

LONG-TERM EFFECTS (CONT'D)

- Slower-healing wounds
- Mood swings
- Eye disease and hearing loss
- Stomach ulcers
- Difficulty having children (males and females)
- Irregular periods and early menopause (females)
- Cancer (in many areas of the body)
- Stroke and brain damage
- Heart attack and disease
- Needing to use more to get the same effect
- Dependence on nicotine
- Financial, work and social problems
- Passive smoking

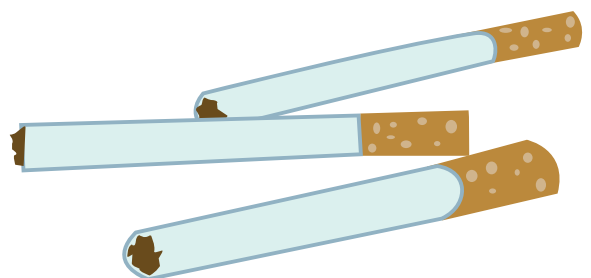
Passive smoking is when someone breathes in smoke from other people smoking. Passive smoking can cause many of the health problems listed above, so it's important not to smoke near other people, particularly babies, children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and people with chronic respiratory conditions.

WITHDRAWAL

Giving up nicotine after using it for a long time is challenging because the body has to get used to functioning without it. Withdrawal symptoms usually start within 2–3 hours after you last use tobacco. The symptoms may last from a few days to a few weeks.

These symptoms can include:

- Cravings
- Irritability, anxiety and depression
- Restless sleep
- Eating more and putting on weight
- Trouble concentrating
- Headaches
- Coughing and sore throat
- Aches and pains
- Upset stomach and bowels



NITROUS OXIDE FACT SHEET



WHAT IS NITROUS OXIDE?

Nitrous oxide is a colourless gas that is commonly used for sedation and pain relief, but is also used by people to feel intoxicated or high.

It is commonly used by dentists and medical professionals to sedate patients undergoing minor medical procedures. It is also a food additive when used as a propellant for whipped cream, and is used in the automotive industry to enhance engine performance. It is also increasingly being used to treat people withdrawing from alcohol dependence. Nitrous oxide is classified as a dissociative anaesthetic and has been found to produce dissociation of the mind from the body (a sense of floating), distorted perceptions and in rare cases, visual hallucinations.

OTHER NAMES

Laughing Gas, Nitro, N₂O, NOS, Whippet, Hippy Crack, Balloons.

HOW IS NITROUS OXIDE USED?

The gas is inhaled, typically by discharging nitrous gas cartridges (bulbs or whippets) into another object, such as a balloon, or directly into the mouth. Inhaling nitrous oxide produces a rapid rush of euphoria and feeling of floating or excitement for a short period of time.

EFFECTS OF NITROUS OXIDE

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries risk. It's important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

Nitrous oxide affects everyone differently, based on:

- The amount taken
- The user's size, weight and health
- Whether the person is used to taking it
- Whether other drugs are taken around the same time

The following effects may be felt almost immediately and can last for a few minutes:

- Euphoria
- Numbness of the body
- Sedation
- Giddiness
- Uncontrolled laughter
- Uncoordinated movements
- Blurred vision
- Confusion
- Dizziness and/or light-headedness
- Sweating
- Feeling unusually tired or weak
- Sudden death

If a large amount of nitrous oxide is inhaled it can produce:

- Loss of blood pressure
- Fainting
- Heart attack
- Inhaling nitrous oxide can be fatal if you don't get enough oxygen, which is known as hypoxia.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Prolonged exposure to nitrous oxide may result in:

- Memory loss
- Vitamin B12 depletion (long-term depletion causes brain and nerve damage)
- Ringing or buzzing in the ears
- Incontinence
- Numbness in the hands or feet
- Limb spasms
- Potential birth defects (if consumed during pregnancy)
- Weakened immune system
- Disruption to reproductive systems
- Depression
- Psychological dependence
- Psychosis

MIXING WITH OTHER DRUGS

There is no current evidence demonstrating that mixing nitrous oxide with other substances increases health risks. However, it is possible that combining the gas with stimulants and other drugs places additional pressure on the heart, increases blood pressure and may disrupt heart rate.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that combining nitrous oxide with other drugs such as cannabis, ketamine, LSD, magic mushroom and salvia can cause intense dissociation.

Mixing nitrous oxide and alcohol can cause:

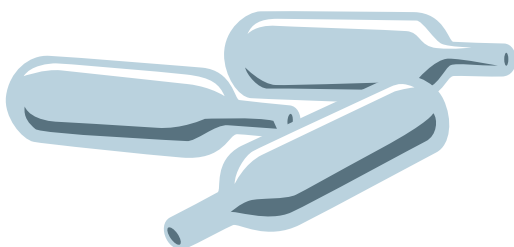
- Confusion
- Feeling heavy or sluggish
- Reduced concentration
- Loss of body control
- Health and safety

When inhaling directly from tanks or whippets (bulbs), the gas is intensely cold (-40C degrees) and can cause frostbite to the nose, lips and throat (including vocal cords). As the gas is also under constant pressure, it can cause ruptures in lung tissue when inhaled directly from these containers. Releasing the nitrous oxide into a balloon helps to warm the gas and normalise the pressure before inhaling.

People can also harm themselves if they use faulty gas dispensers, which may explode. Dispensing several gas canisters consecutively with one cracker (a handheld device used to 'crack' a nitrous oxide bulb/whippet) can also cause cold burns to the hands.

It is possible to reduce the risks associated with misusing nitrous oxide by not:

- Using it alone or in dangerous or isolated places
- Putting plastic bags over the head or impeding breathing in any way
- Spraying near flammable substances, such as naked flames or cigarettes
- Drinking alcohol or taking other drugs
- Standing or dancing while inhaling, as the user may pass out



SOLVENTS FACT SHEET



WHAT ARE SOLVENTS?

Solvents are common household, industrial and medical products that produce vapours, which some people inhale (breathe in) to make them feel intoxicated or high.

Some common solvents include:

- Aerosol spray
- Chrome-based paint
- Paint and paint thinner
- Felt-tipped pens
- Correction fluid (e.g. 'Liquid Paper')
- Gas from lighters or barbecues (butane)
- Cleaning fluid
- Glue
- Petrol
- Nitrous oxide

OTHER NAMES

Glue, Gas, Gasoline, Sniff, Huff, Chroming, and Poppers.

HOW ARE SOLVENTS USED?

Solvents are breathed in through the nose or mouth.

They may be sprayed into a plastic bag, poured into a bottle or soaked onto a cloth or sleeve before being inhaled.

Sometimes they are inhaled directly from the container or are sprayed directly into the mouth or nose. This method is very dangerous because it can cause suffocation.

EFFECTS OF SOLVENTS

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. It's important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

Solvents affect everyone differently, based on:

- Size, weight and health
- Whether the person is used to taking it
- Whether other drugs are taken around the same time
- The amount taken
- The strength of the drug

Sniffing can cause:

- Intoxication
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Injuries
- Delirium
- Seizures
- Pneumonia from inhaling vomit
- Dependence
- Brain damage
- Coma
- Abnormal heart rhythm
- Sudden death
- Asphyxiation (if using a plastic bag)

Sniffing is always risky, but some situations make it even more dangerous:

- Sniffing in an enclosed space or indoors
- Running or doing other physical activity after sniffing (could cause death due to cardiac sensitisation)
- Mixing sniffing with medicines or illegal drugs
- Sniffing when the person has other health problems

OVERDOSE

If you inhale a substance many times or use a particularly strong inhalant, you could overdose. If anyone experiences any of the symptoms below, call an ambulance straight away by dialling 999.

- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
- Irregular heartbeat
- Chest pain
- Hallucinations
- Blackout, seizures and coma

SUDDEN SNIFFING DEATH

Inhaling aerosol sprays, cleaning and correction fluids has been known to cause sudden death. It is believed that chemicals in these products can cause heart failure, particularly if the person is stressed or does heavy exercise after inhaling. This is very rare.

WITHDRAWAL

Giving up inhalants after using them for a long time is challenging because the body has to get used to functioning without them. Withdrawal symptoms usually start 24–48 hours after the last use, and may last for 2 – 5 days. These symptoms can include:

- Hangover
- Headache, nausea and stomach pain
- Tiredness, shakiness, tremors
- Cramps
- Hallucinations and visual disorders, such as seeing spots



COMING DOWN

In the days after inhalant use, you may experience:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Mental numbness
- Nausea
- Drowsiness
- Long-term effects

Regular use of inhalants may eventually cause:

- Irritability and depression
- Memory loss
- Reduced attention span and ability to think clearly
- Pimples around the mouth and lips
- Pale appearance
- Tremors
- Weight loss
- Reduced growth potential (height)
- Tiredness
- Excessive thirst
- Loss of sense of smell and hearing
- Problems with blood production, which may result in anaemia, irregular heartbeat, heart muscle damage
- Chest pain and angina
- Indigestion and stomach ulcers
- Liver and kidney damage
- Needing to use more to get the same effect
- Dependence on inhalants
- Financial, work and social problems

Most of these long-term effects can be reversed if use is stopped. However, some inhalants, such as cleaning products, correction fluid, aerosol sprays and petrol can cause permanent damage.

Some chemicals can build up in the body and damage the stomach, intestines, brain, nervous system, kidneys and liver.

USING INHALANTS WITH OTHER DRUGS

The effects of taking inhalants with other drugs, including over-the-counter or prescribed medications, can be unpredictable and dangerous, and could include:

Solvents + alcohol, benzodiazepines or opiates: enormous strain on the body, and can affect breathing rate and may increase the risk of passing out and suffocating or choking on vomit.