

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS FROM DRUGS?

DrugWise

Drug dangers are the result of interactions between drug, set and setting.

The drug

Drugs such as alcohol, heroin and tranquillisers have a sedative effect. Sedatives can result in a fatal overdose if a lot is taken. They can also affect co-ordination making accidents more likely. Use of sedatives can lead to physical dependence and withdrawal symptoms.

Drugs like amphetamine, cocaine, crack, ecstasy and some solvents have a stimulant effect giving a rush of energy. Stimulants can produce anxiety or panic attacks, especially if taken in large quantities. They can be particularly dangerous for people with heart or blood pressure problems.

Drugs such as LSD, magic mushrooms and, to a lesser extent cannabis and ecstasy, have a hallucinogenic effect - altering the way the user feels, sees, hears, tastes or smells. Hallucinogenic drugs may produce disturbing experiences and may lead to erratic or dangerous behaviour.

The dangers of a drugs also depend on:
How much is taken, how often the drug is taken, the other things present in the drug and interactions with other substances such as alcohol or prescribed drugs.

The setting

The place where drugs are used and what people are doing at the time can influence how dangerous it is. For example, in a hot club or in places that are potentially dangerous like canal banks, derelict buildings etc. Driving a car or operating machinery while on drugs will also greatly increase the risks of accidents.

The set

Personal factors can be just as important as the drugs being used.

People's expectations and their state of mind before using are very important. Some people may have physical or mental health issues that affect the way the drug effects them.

The route

Injecting is risky because it's difficult to know how much is being taken and is associated with infection if equipment is shared. Eating/drinking is probably safest but can be risky if people take a lot in one go. Smoking is relatively safe, though regular smoking can damage the respiratory system, especially if tobacco is used. Squirted solvents onto a rag before inhaling is safer than inhaling from a bag.

