

Drugs and Mental health

Drugs

Cocaine

Cocaine is a white flaky powder obtained from the leaves of the coca plant. It is odourless, soluble, and has powerful stimulant properties similar to those of amphetamines. Cocaine can cause **anxiety**, **paranoia**, **depression**, and often the inability to sleep can occur during the come down period, thus encouraging users to repeat the dose in order to maintain the effect. Users can develop a strong psychological dependence to cocaine, often taking more to deal with the comedown.

Ecstasy

Ecstasy is made up of a mixture of drugs, including a synthetic drug called MDMA, and is classed as a hallucinogenic amphetamine. As the drug kicks in, users may experience an initial rush of nervousness, and uncertainty. Some users have reported a bad experience on ecstasy, including feelings of **paranoia** and confusion. It is very common to suffer minor **depression** in the days following the use of ecstasy. There is fierce debate about the long-term psychological effects of ecstasy. Some users have experienced memory problems, severe sleep problems and major **depression** following regular use.

Speed

Speed (amphetamine) is a stimulant that usually comes in the form of grey, white or dirty-white powder. It's snorted or dissolved in liquid for injection or drinking, or swallowed in pill form. Some users become tense and **anxious** while on speed. The comedown can last for a couple of days, leaving users feeling tired, depressed and irritable. In short term, memory and concentration are all affected. Long-term users may become dependent on the buzz speed gives them while heavy abuse over long periods has been linked to mental illnesses such as **psychosis**.

Cannabis

Cannabis is a natural substance from a plant commonly called hemp. It comes in a solid dark lump known as resin, leaves, stalks, seeds called grass and also as sticky oil. Cannabis can affect short-term memory and ability to concentrate. It can also make some users **paranoid** and **anxious**, depending on their mood and situation.

LSD

Lysergic acid diethylamide is a hallucinogenic drug that comes in tiny squares of paper, often with a picture on one side. LSD can have a powerful, often unpredictable effect on the mind. Users may experience their surroundings in a very different way, including the distortion of objects, movement, vision and hearing. Hallucinations are also common. Some users experience flashbacks of past 'trips' for a long time afterwards. In the worst cases, dizziness, disorientation, fear, **paranoia**, and **panic** may arise. The likelihood of a bad trip will increase when users are in a bad mood, **anxious**, nervous, uncomfortable or have a history of mental problems.

People who shouldn't take drugs

People with existing psychological problems such as **depression**, **anxiety** and **schizophrenia** risk complications by taking any of the drugs above.

Alcohol

Alcohol is socially acceptable drug. It is described as a depressant i.e. it slows down your body's responses. It can exaggerate your moods and may also reduce feelings of anxiety. For this reason, people drink alcohol not only because they want to socialise but also because it helps you to

- relax
- gain confidence
- relieve boredom
- escape from worries or painful emotions, etc

For majority of people, regular moderate drinking tends not to have cause any physical or psychological health related problems (the official guidelines recommend that men should not drink more than 3-4 units a day and women 2-3 units a day), however, for some, drinking can get out of control and results in alcoholism.

Heavy drinking can leave you feeling out of control eventually leading to physical and psychological dependency. Tolerance levels increase – you need more to reach the same level of state. Over time it leads to damaged liver, stomach ulcers and heart disease and in extreme cases excessive alcohol in the body can even lead to death. Socially, it is certainly linked to violent crime, domestic violence & road accidents.