



### **Risk factors for drug-related harm**

The effects of a drug, and how long they last, depend on a number of factors:

- the type and strength
- how the drug was made
- your height, weight, age, and metabolism
- the amount you take
- how often or how long you have used the drug
- how the drug is taken (orally, snorting or injecting). Compared with swallowing, snorting and injecting are more likely to lead to overdose. If injecting drugs, there is an increased risk of tetanus, infection and vein damage. If sharing injecting equipment there is an increased risk of hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV/AIDS.

Using drugs may increase the risk of experiencing mental health issues for people with a history or family history of these conditions.

**Mixing drugs** – including over-the-counter or prescribed medications – can be unpredictable and dangerous.

### **Harms from drug use**

Drug use can affect short- and long-term health , including physical and mental health.

People may experience some of the following:

- Taking part in risky behaviours such as drink driving or unprotected sex
- Changes in behaviour such as mood swings or increased aggression toward others
- Impacts on **sleep** or **experiencing insomnia**
- Cognitive/memory problems
- Reduced appetite or not eating a **balanced diet**
- Regular **colds** and **flu**
- Long term health impacts such as **liver**, **kidney** and **heart problems** or **cancer** (depending on the type of drug used and how frequently it was used)
- **Dental health problems** (cavities and gum disease)

- Mental health issues such as anxiety and depression
- Dependence
- Overdose
- **Psychosis**
- Infectious disease from shared injecting equipment
- Damage to veins from unsafe injecting practices
- Financial, work or social problems.

### **Effects of common drugs**

#### **Cannabis** (hash, pot, dope, weed, grass, skunk, marijuana)

- may cause relaxation and altered perception
- can lead to increased **heart rate** and **blood pressure**
- can make you feel relaxed and happy, but can also cause lethargy, anxiety, paranoia, and psychosis in extreme cases. A history or family history of mental illness may increase the possibility of more extreme psychotic reactions
- is linked to mental health problems such as **schizophrenia** and, when smoked, to lung diseases such as **asthma**, chronic bronchitis and **lung, throat, mouth** and tongue **cancer**
- affects how your brain works. Regular use can make it hard for you to concentrate, learn and retain information
- reduces your fertility
- when mixed with **tobacco**, is likely to increase the risk of **heart disease** and lung cancer.

Sources: [Alcohol and Drug Foundation](#), [Better Health Channel](#)