



NITROUS OXIDE

nitrous, hippy crack, N₂O, laughing gas

What is Nitrous Oxide?

- Nitrous oxide (nitrous/laughing gas) is a gas that has been safely used recreationally since the late 1700s, and as a mild anesthetic in combination with oxygen for over a century.
- It is classified as a “dissociative anesthetic”.
- Nitrous is legally available for over-the-counter sale, although in many states it is illegal to sell nitrous to a minor. Some states also have laws against inhaling nitrous for the purpose of intoxication as well as possession of nitrous with the intent to inhale, and a person caught using it recreationally could face misdemeanor charges.
- Nitrous is most commonly sold in small canisters for use in making whipped cream (hence the name “whippets”), although it is also found in large tanks in some places.

How is Nitrous Oxide used?

- Nitrous is always inhaled.
- Users either inhale the gas directly from a tank or else dispense it first into balloons

What are the effects of Nitrous Oxide?

- A lungful of nitrous oxide results in the temporary loss of motor control and a “dissociated” psychological effect, where sensations and perceptions become disconnected.
- Uncontrollable laughter is also common, which is the reason that ‘Laughing Gas’ is the most common nickname for nitrous oxide.
- Users report a dreamy mental state, and may experience mild audio and visual hallucinations.
- The effects come on immediately and usually last less than a minute. Repeated inhalations of nitrous oxide can extend and intensify the experience.
- Visual effects are associated with open eye visuals having distortions of the area around you and vision of a purple or grey-blue hue.

What is the dosage of Nitrous Oxide?

Every individual reacts differently to every chemical, This information is intended to describe the range of dosages others report using and it should not be construed as a recommendation of any sort. Individuals can respond very differently to the same dosage. What is safe for one can be deadly for another.

- Nitrous is generally inhaled by the balloon full. Although it is accurately controlled in medical use, without expensive equipment, there is no way to measure the ‘dose’ of a gas being administered.
- One whippet cartridge contains eight grams of nitrous oxide.

Harm Reduction Tips for Nitrous Oxide?

- Nitrous can produce an immediate loss of motor control. Stay seated if you are going to inhale nitrous. There have been many injuries and a few deaths from people who have fallen down after inhaling nitrous oxide.
- Your brain needs oxygen! Brain damage and suffocation can result from inhaling pure nitrous for an extended period of time due to hypoxia.
- Always have a sober sitter. People have died from falling forward on to pillows (or bags from which they are inhaling) after using nitrous.
- Nitrous can be extremely cold when it comes out of the tank or dispenser. Cold gas can burn the skin as well as the lips and throat. Dispensing the gas into a balloon and allowing it to warm up before inhaling it can reduce this risk.
- High pressure levels in the tank or dispenser can shoot the gas out at a dangerously fast speed and damage the lungs. Again, it is safer to inhale from a balloon than from a tank or ‘cracker’.
- Nitrous can be psychologically addictive. While rare, many people have become addicted to nitrous and other dissociatives.
- The regular use of nitrous can cause long-lasting numbness in the extremities and other neurological problems.
- The regular use of nitrous can deplete the vitamin B12, and has caused serious (but rare) complications in individuals with lower than average B12 levels.
- Nitrous is considered “one of the safest anesthetics” in a surgical setting.

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