

Legal and illegal drugs

Legal Drugs

Anything that is deemed 'licit,' is within the law, or legal. Legal drugs on the market include caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol. People can legally go anywhere they are sold and purchase them (at a certain age). Prescription drugs are also licit drugs, which are legal with a doctor's orders. These include medicines used for illness and over-the-counter drugs.

Illegal Drugs

Illegal drugs have been classified as illegal because they pose a threat to people and their lives. The drugs are not only dangerous to that person but also dangerous to society and even the national and global economy. Illicit drugs include:

- Cocaine
- Mushrooms
- Meth
- Heroin

Some of the drugs are classified by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) into groups based on the risk of abuse or harm. They come with high risk and no benefits. Schedule I drugs are the highest risk, compared with Schedule II drugs, with lower risk but still the same challenges. These include methadone, morphine, and codeine.

When thinking about the terminology people use to describe drugs, it makes no difference to the people who are suffering from addiction or love someone with an addiction. Whether licit or illicit, drugs like nicotine and alcohol can be absolutely harmful. More deaths are caused each year by tobacco than HIV, illegal drug use, alcohol use, suicides, and murders combined. Alcohol was the most harmful drug compared to others. Alcohol is a factor in thousands of car accidents and a large percentage of crime. Drinking too much alcohol can lead to dependence and addiction. Using certain drugs that are prescribed for pain can lead to addiction. The use of codeine can lead to addiction. There are so many reasons why licit and illicit drugs are important to know about, not only to understand the terms, but also to figure out how to help a loved one who needs help. Professional help is on the horizon for those who reach out or ask for help for a loved one.

A drug is any chemical substance that alerts mood, perception or consciousness.

If drugs cause physical changes in the body, the words addict, addictive, addicted and addiction are used.

Addict: An addict is a person, who is unable to free himself from a harmful habit.

Addictive: Addictive means that something makes you dependent on something.

Addiction: Addiction means dependence on something.

Addicted: You are addicted to drugs, if you need them to feel good and if you have withdrawal symptoms if you don't take drugs.

The common addictive drugs are: alcohol, morphine, heroin, cocaine and barbiturates. Drugs create a state of mind in some individuals which is termed psychic dependence.

The different types of drugs, what the law says about them and how they are taken

1. Drugs that depress the nervous system: alcohol, barbiturates (sleeping pills, downers), minor tranquillizers (valium and librium), solvents and gases (as in glues, lighter fuel, aerosols, cleaning fluids);

Alcohol: alcohol is taken as a drink. It's illegal to sell it without a licence. In Austria you are allowed to drink alcohol at the age of 16.

Barbiturates: To get barbiturates you need a prescription. You take it as pills or potions or injected.

Minor Tranquillizers: You also need a prescription for getting tranquillizers, but the possession without a prescription isn't illegal.

Solvents and gases: You have to inhale it (sniff). If you know that someone under 18 wants to sniff, it's illegal to supply it to them.

Effects: These drugs make you feel less tense and more relaxed. But you work less well mentally and physically and you lose self-control. Large amounts can make you drunk, feel drowsy or send you to sleep or unconscious. You can become psychologically and physically dependent and the more often you use them, the more you need to get the desired effects.

2. Drugs that reduce pain: Opiates (heroin, morphine codeine), opioids, narcotic analgesics (stomach medicines, cough mixtures);

Opiates: You need a prescription to get them. Heroin is sniffed or injected.

Opioids: You also need a prescription. Opioids are similar synthetic drugs like Opiates and they are injected or swallowed.

Narcotic Analgesics: You can buy dilute mixtures at the drugstore, but for stronger mixtures you need a prescription. You have to swallow them.

Effects: You feel less pain and worry. But you get to need higher and more frequent doses and you become physically and psychologically dependent. You become very moody and you may have problems with breathing, constipation and irregular periods.

3. Drugs that stimulate the nervous system: Amphetamines (uppers, speed, ecstasy), cocaine (coke, crack), caffeine (coffee, tea, cocoa, soft drinks, chocolate, analgesic pills), tobacco, LSD;

Amphetamines: A prescription is necessary. You sniff or inject them or take them in form of pills.

Cocaine: The possession is illegal without a prescription. Coke is sniffed or injected and crack is smoked.

Caffeine: There are no restrictions for taking caffeine. You take it as a drink or as pills.

Tobacco: It's illegal to sell it to under-16s. You smoke it, apart from snuff, which is sniffed.

LSD: The possession is illegal. LSD is taken as pills, paper squares or tablets.

Effects: These make you feel more alert, you are able to stay awake and active longer without becoming tired or sleepy. But later you become depressed, hungry and tired. If you use it very often it makes you anxious, agitated and you are unable to sleep. You also can become psychologically dependent.

4. Drugs that alter perception: Magic mushrooms, cannabis (marijuana, hash, cannabis oil)

Magic Mushrooms: Sometimes you use them for medical purposes. You have to eat them raw, cooked or brewed into a drink. Usually, you dry them before eating them.

Cannabis: It's illegal to possess cannabis and to let people smoke it on your piece of land. You smoke marijuana on its own and hash in cigarettes with tobacco or in a pipe or it can be eaten in cakes or other foods.

Effects: These make all your senses more intense and you get a feeling of unreality. They also can cause panic or anxiety. But there's no risk of physical dependency, but repeated use may cause temporary psychological disturbance.

How drugs can affect the individual and society

- Health: A person may become so dependent on drugs that he becomes physically ill. Heavy smokers of tobacco and cannabis get bronchitis, asthma and cancer. People on injected drugs often catch infections from sharing needles. If you take Extasy, you have to drink a lot, because you are very active and alert and you can dry out and die.
- Work: It may become difficult to concentrate and to do your work very well. You can be dismissed.
- Life: Drugs are very dangerous. People on drugs are more likely to die than those who don't take drugs. They die from overdoses, accidents, infections and fatal mixtures of drugs.
- Family: A person on drugs often becomes moody. His relationships with his family, friends or colleagues may become tense and may break down altogether.
- Crime: Once a person is dependent, he has a strong desire for drugs. This desire can become so great that a drug dependent will do anything to get money so that he can buy drugs. Girls may turn to prostitution, boys to mugging or shoplifting. They might even steal from parents or friends or they may start dealing with drugs.

Why do people take drugs?

- They want something different, new and exciting.
- They like to be different from others.
- They take drugs, because their friends take them => peer pressure!

- They are frustrated from their daily life.
- They want to show off and be cool.
- They have personal problems, eg. quarrels with their parents, divorced parents, problems at school..
- They were neglected by their parents.
- They grew up under bad conditions.
- It's a kick for them to do something illegal.
- They think drugs solve problems.
- They are curious.
- They were persuaded by dealers.
- They try to escape from reality.
- They are bored.
- They have no self-confidence to say no.
- They don't want to be a chicken.

Alcohol and Tobacco

Alcohol

What is alcohol?

- It's a chemical obtained by the fermentation of cereals, milk or fruit, or by distillation.
- It's an element present in a wide range of drinks. The alcohol content varies according to the drink.
- It is used to preserve animals and plants for museums.
- It's a solvent. It has many industrial uses and is used in the manufacture of explosives, perfumes and lacquers.
- It's an important fuel.
- It can damage animal and plant life. If a human being has too much alcohol, he can die from alcoholic poisoning.
- It's a drug, which can alter the mind and the body work.

Why do people drink alcohol?

People drink alcohol to celebrate, to relax, to be sociable, to feel adult and manly, because all others do it, because they are bored, because they enjoy the feeling they get from drinking, because they like the taste or because they like going out.

How alcohol affects the human body:

- The nervous system: It acts as a depressant and slows down the way the brain works. Large doses make a person sleepy.
- The heart: Alcohol increases a person's blood pressure and pulse rate. Large amounts over a long time can damage the heart and make it weak and fatty.
- The liver: Alcohol passes through the liver on its way into the bloodstream and it damage the liver. Heavy drinkers die more often from cirrhosis of the liver than the general population.
- The stomach: Small amounts of alcohol help digestion by increasing the production of acid in the stomach. But large concentrated amounts irritate the stomach and can cause vomiting.

Very heavy drinking can damage the lining of the stomach, so that food is not digested.
- The skin: Alcohol increases the flow in the blood vessels near the skin. More blood reaches the skin, so that the person feels warm. The increased flow of blood to the skin means that a person is losing heat.

Alcohol affects a person in different ways. The rate at which a person gets drunk depends on how quickly the alcohol enters the bloodstream. The presence of food in the stomach slows down the rate at which alcohol passes into the rest of the body. A certain number of drinks taken during a meal may not make a person drunk. The same drinks, taken on their own, might make the person drunk.

Alcohol is habit-forming. Having a few drinks is not dangerous in itself, so long as a person keeps the amount under control. But someone who is a regular heavy drinker may reach the stage when he cannot do without alcohol.

A person who is physically or psychologically dependent on alcohol is called an alcoholic. Alcoholism is an illness.

Regular heavy drinking can affect the mind as well as the body. A person's memory of recent events may fail. Permanent brain damage can occur. If a heavy drinker stop drinking he may suffer withdrawal symptoms. He also may suffer from DTs (delirium tremens). During an attack of DTs, the alcoholic's mind is confused. He is afraid of being attacked by imaginary creatures. He doesn't know where he is and he can't recognise people.

The presence of alcohol in the bloodstream affects a person's driving skill. Many accidents are caused by drunken drivers. People who are drunk often commit crimes and drunken husbands often beat their wives under the influence of alcohol.

Alcohol also can cause problems at home, at work, the breakdown of personal relationships, financial difficulties and the chance of an early death. You spend a lot of money on it and you become unreliable.

Alcoholism is an illness, which can be controlled, once the alcoholic is willing to accept that he is ill and needs treatment for alcoholism. It can only be controlled if the person gives up drinking for life.

What is being drunk?

If you only drink a little, you'll only get mildly drunk. This usually feels rather pleasant. You feel happy and lose some of your inhibitions, e.g. shyness. Being slightly drunk can stimulate conversations and friendships.

If you go on drinking, you get really drunk. You lose your self-control, talking is difficult for you and your vision becomes blurred. You begin talking very loudly and may get rather aggressive. You may lose so many of your inhibitions that you say or do things that you'll regret later.

If you still go on drinking when you're really drunk, you can become heavily drunk. You can have a alcohol poisoning. You lose all control over your speech and movements and you will

probably be sick. You won't know what you're doing. You may lose your memory and be unable to remember afterwards what happened.

If the amount of alcohol in the bloodstream goes beyond a certain level, it can produce stupor, coma or death. Mixing drug-taking with drinking alcohol is dangerous even in small amounts and can be fatal.

Tobacco

Why do people smoke?

Many people who smoke enjoy the taste and aroma of tobacco and tobacco smoke. Many smokers say that it helps them to relax. It calms the nerves. It's also good for your digestion. Many smokers also smoke from habit.

Tobacco and the human body:

Tobacco smoke is a mixture of tiny droplets of tar and gases. It contains about 300 chemicals. 40 of them are known as poisons. Many of them can damage the body.

Nicotine is a very powerful drug and is the addictive agent in cigarettes. Nicotine stimulates the nervous system and causes a craving for tobacco. It increases the blood pressure and the heart rate. It also increases the tendency of blood to clot.

Tobacco tar contains a number of cancer-producing substances. When tobacco smoke is inhaled it coats the lungs with tar. The further a cigarette is smoked, the more tar and nicotine is inhaled. The last third of a cigarette produces more tar and nicotine than the first two thirds put together.

Carbon Monoxide is the deadly gas that is present in car exhaust fumes. It is also present in cigarette smoke. It affects the blood's ability to carry oxygen round the body.

The dusts in cigarette smoke irritate the lining of the air tubes.

- Teeth: The teeth of heavy smokers may become yellow from nicotine stains. Their breath often smells.
- Lungs: Smoking can damage the lungs so badly that a person cannot breathe properly. Many smokers suffer from bronchitis or asthma. Also lung cancer is the result of smoking.
- Heart: Smoking causes many deaths from coronary heart disease. Smoking weakens the heart muscle and produces diseases of the arteries.
- Stomach: Tobacco smoke irritates the lining of the stomach. It can affect the digestive system so that food isn't digested properly.

Smoking and pregnancy:

Every time a pregnant woman smokes, she poisons her baby's bloodstream with nicotine and carbon monoxide. Smoking can restrict your baby's growth inside the womb. It can make him underdeveloped and underweight at birth. It can even kill him.

Risks:

- Cigarette smoking is responsible for premature deaths.
- One in ten heavy smokers dies of lung cancer. Half of those who die from lung cancer are under 65.
- Smoking often causes heart attacks.
- Cigarettes causes bronchitis and asthma.
- An average cigarette smoker is likely to give up 5 ½ years of his life because he smokes.

Dangers and consequences of taking drugs

First of all drugs damage your health, family life, work and the social esteem.

But it also increases the rate of homeless and poor people. Many families and individuals leave the cities where the drug abuse and dealing is very high. They don't feel safe there, because there's a lot of violence among drug dealers and the police.

The dealers always try to persuade also young people to take drugs. They involve little children in the drug scene by giving them eg. sweets with drugs in it.

Parents are worried about their children, because drugs are also sold in schools. Children which grew up under very poor or hard conditions often deal themselves.

The dealers are very violent too. The Jamaican dealers are some of the worst. Since the late '70s, the Jamaicans have been involved in as many as 800 murders nationwide.

What can we do against drugs?

1. Create an international statute on drugs. A similar law, enforced by an international court, could be used against major drug suppliers and dealers.
2. Protect children from addicted parents.
3. Keep schools open round the clock. Children, who are alone at home every day or who have nothing to do at home, can come to schools at any hour for help, recreation, study or just comfort.
4. We should allow states to build prisons in or transfer prisoners to other states. The distance from home base would make it more difficult for dealers to continue running their organizations from behind bars.
5. Police officer meetings from every state should be founded. The officers can share their experiences and knowledge.
6. Don't punish addicts. Drug addiction is a medical problem which could be solved by establishing certain programs. Addicts should be treated by private doctors and they should have the chance to change their used needles to clean needles.
7. Rich countries should help such countries which are dependent on drugs like Peru and Colombia to solve their drug problem. They should create employment.
8. Users and dealers should be amnestied and should have the chance to rehabilitation.
9. There should be no foreign aid for drug-involved countries.
10. College graduates should have the chance to serve three years in a municipal police department to relieve more experienced personnel of such jobs as ticket writing and desk duty.

to pursue investigative work. The graduates should get salaries but no pensions, so their cost would be a third lower than that of a career officer.