

Risk factors

All drug use involves a degree of risk. Factors such as the person using the drug, the drug itself, how it is used and the environment in which it is used influence the degree of risk. While many young people will experiment with drugs most will not progress to regular use of drugs or develop problematic drug use.

A number of environmental and individual characteristics contribute to some young people, irrespective of language or cultural background, being particularly vulnerable to developing problematic drug use, including illicit drug use. These young people are likely to have poor coping skills, to associate with peers who use drugs, to have a low commitment to education and poor school achievement, to have a history of poor school attendance and to drop out of school early. They may have experienced ineffective family management, parental role modelling of drug use, childhood sexual and physical assault or mental health problems such as depression.

Vulnerability to problematic drug use has been shown to increase as the number of risk factors increase.

