

Where can I get further information or help?

In case of emergency involving the use of any drug, ring 000 for an ambulance, or call a hospital or doctor.

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)

Telephone: 02 9361 8000 (Sydney)
Toll free: 1800 422 599

Kids Helpline

Toll free telephone: 1800 55 1800
www.kidshelp.com.au

Legal Aid Hotline for under 18s

Toll free telephone: 1800 10 18 10

LawAccess NSW

Telephone: 1300 888 529
www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au

Aboriginal Legal Service

Telephone: 02 8303 6699

NSW Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy

www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au

This publication is intended as a guide for students and staff of the NSW Department of Education and Training to assist them in understanding issues regarding alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines and ecstasy. The contents do not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as such. Persons wishing formal legal advice on matters referred to in this publication should consult their solicitors.

© 2010 Education and Training, Drug Prevention Programs



Education
& Training



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



ALCOHOL

CANNABIS

AMPHETAMINES

ECSTASY

Alcohol



Wine, beer, ale,
spirits, liqueur, cocktails,
coolers, shooters,
booze.



What is alcohol?

Alcohol is a depressant drug that affects the central nervous system and slows down many of the brain's functions.

How does alcohol affect people?

The short term effects of drinking alcohol may include:

- > feeling relaxed
- > reduced concentration
- > lack of coordination and slower reflexes
- > lowered inhibitions and more confidence
- > flushed appearance
- > blurred vision and slurred speech
- > intense moods e.g. aggression, elation, depression
- > getting a headache
- > feeling sleepy
- > nausea (feeling sick) vomiting.

Drinking a lot of alcohol regularly over time may cause physical, emotional or social problems.

These may include:

- > concentration and short term memory problems
- > damage to the heart, liver, stomach and brain
- > dependence (alcoholism)
- > depression
- > family and relationship problems
- > poor work performance
- > legal and financial problems.



What is binge drinking?

Binge drinking occurs when a person drinks a lot over a short period of time. It is sometimes referred to as 'drinking to get drunk'. As well as feeling many of the short term effects, being drunk stops a person from thinking clearly and acting sensibly. This may put them and others at risk of harm from injury or assault. Lowered inhibitions may lead to risky behaviour such as unsafe sex or drink driving. Serious binge drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning.

What is drink spiking?

The term 'drink spiking' refers to alcohol or other drugs being added to a drink without the person's consent or knowledge. Alcohol is the most likely drug used for drink spiking. It may be added to non alcoholic drinks or as extra spirits added to alcoholic drinks. Drink spiking is illegal and can result in a fine or jail term. It may be associated with crimes such as robbery and sexual assault.

What are some strategies to protect against drink spiking?

Some strategies may include:

- > accepting drinks only from known people
- > ensuring drinks are not left unattended
- > avoiding a drink if you are unsure
- > looking out for friends.

**Marijuana, grass, pot,
dope, weed, mull,
heads, bhang, yarndi,
ganja or bud.**

What is cannabis?

Cannabis is an illegal drug and is the general name used for products made from the Cannabis sativa plant, such as marijuana, hashish (hash) or hash oil. THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) is the main ingredient in cannabis that causes the 'high' feeling.



How does cannabis affect people?

The short term effects of cannabis use may include:

- > feeling of wellbeing
- > talking and laughing more than usual
- > poor coordination and concentration
- > coughing and dry mouth
- > sleepiness
- > red or bloodshot eyes
- > feeling hungry (the 'munchies')
- > reduced inhibitions (doing or saying things you normally would not)
- > confusion
- > feeling anxious and paranoid (thinking that people are out to get you)
- > panic attacks
- > vomiting
- > difficulty remembering things that have just happened
- > hallucinations after large doses.



Cannabis use affects the ability to perform complex tasks such as driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery. It can decrease inhibitions that may lead to engaging in risky behaviour such as unsafe sex and dangerous driving.

What are the effects of long term cannabis use?

The long term effects of using cannabis may include:

- > increased risk of respiratory diseases such as lung cancer and bronchitis
- > dependence (both physical and psychological)
- > decrease in concentration, memory and the ability to learn.

THC is stored in body fat and slowly released back into the bloodstream and excreted from the body. It can be detected in the body a month or more after use depending on how much and how often it was used.



Are there other problems associated with cannabis use?

Other potential problems that could be linked to cannabis use may include:

- > poor school performance
- > poor performance at work
- > increased likelihood of accidents
- > problems concentrating
- > difficulties with relationships (family and friends)
- > problems with the law
- > emotional disorders such as depression.

Can someone become addicted to cannabis?

People who use cannabis regularly over time may become dependent on it and have difficulty cutting down or quitting.

Withdrawal symptoms may include:

- > headaches
- > nausea
- > feeling irritable
- > depression
- > feeling anxious
- > difficulty sleeping
- > night sweats.



Is smoking cannabis more harmful than smoking cigarettes?

Many of the cancer causing agents found in tobacco smoke are also found in cannabis smoke. Cannabis smokers tend to inhale more deeply and hold the smoke in the lungs longer, therefore increasing the risk of damage to the lungs. If a cannabis smoker is also a tobacco smoker or mixes the tobacco with cannabis, the harmful effects are greater. Mixing cannabis with tobacco can result in the added problem of nicotine addiction.

Is smoking cannabis through a 'bong' safe?

There is no safe way of smoking cannabis. Smoking is a very dangerous way of using any drug. Smoking cannabis through a 'bong' (water pipe) can be harmful. Sucking on the 'bong' forces the smoke deeper into the lungs. This exposes more of the lungs to tar and harmful toxins without increasing the effects. Plastic bottles and aluminium cans, when used as 'bongs', also give off toxic fumes.

Does the use of cannabis cause mental health problems?

Some people have unpleasant experiences from using cannabis, such as anxiety, panic, paranoia and hallucinations. People with a predisposition to mental health problems such as schizophrenia, are believed to be more likely to experience a psychosis (lose contact with reality). Symptoms may be made worse for those who already have a serious mental illness.



Speed, whiz, goey, meth, ice, shabu, base.

What are amphetamines?

Amphetamines, commonly called 'speed', are a group of stimulant drugs that increase central nervous system activity, speeding up the way the brain does things. Methamphetamine is the strongest form of amphetamine. It is against the law to possess and use amphetamines (unless prescribed by a doctor) and it is against the law to make or sell them.

What is in amphetamines?

Amphetamines are usually produced illegally in backyard laboratories and the quality varies greatly. Some may only be 5% pure, while the remaining 95% may be made up of substances such as glucose, bicarbonate of soda, ephedrine, vitamins, caffeine or other chemicals. Even though there is little evidence of deliberate use of dangerous chemicals, no one can presume that when they buy amphetamines they are buying something safe.

Are 'speed' and 'ice' the same?

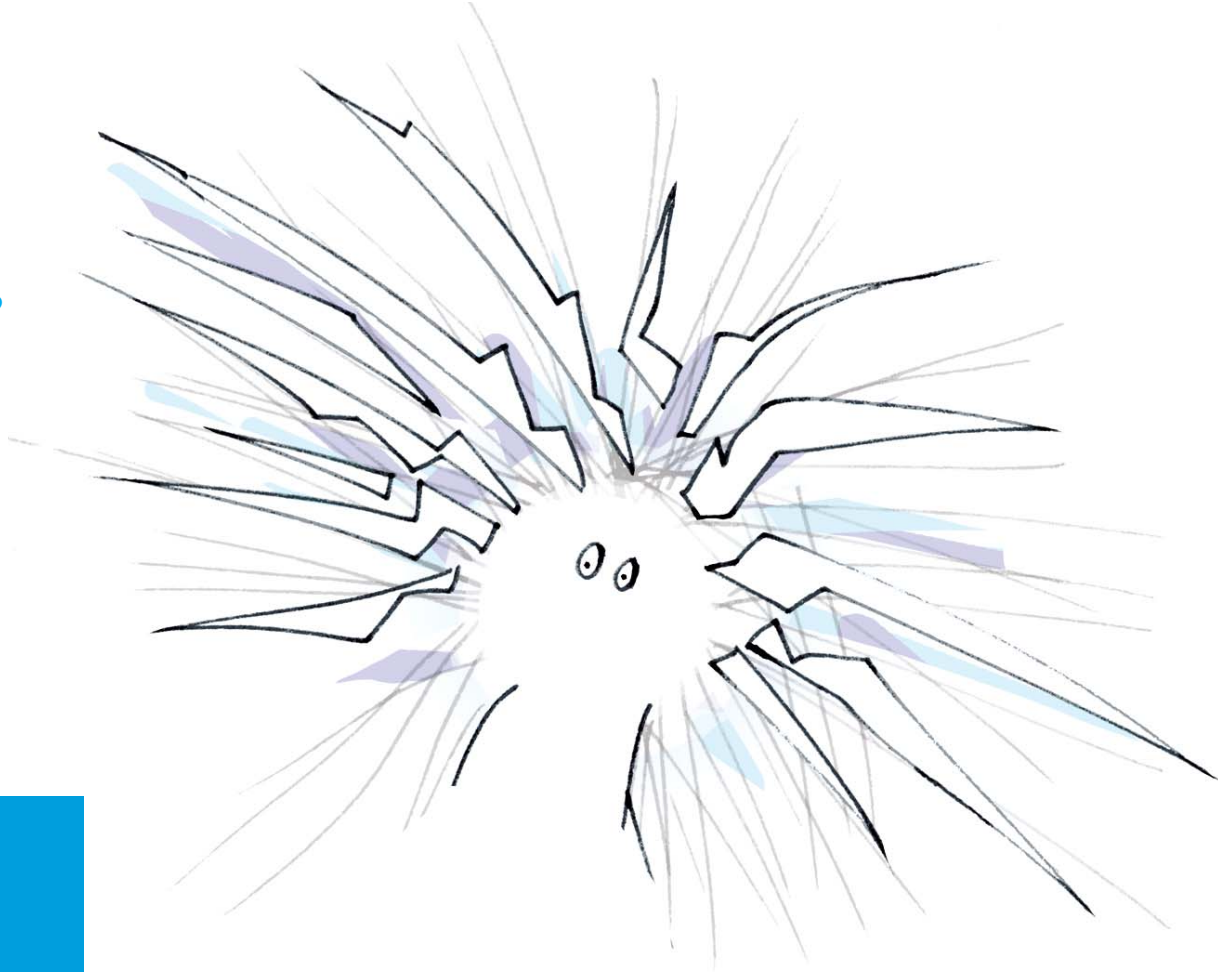
'Speed' and 'ice' are similar drugs and have similar effects. However, 'ice' may have more powerful effects because of its higher purity.

How do amphetamines affect people?

The short term effects of using speed may include:

- > feeling of wellbeing
- > increased energy and hyperactivity
- > reduced inhibitions
- > talkativeness
- > reduction of appetite
- > teeth grinding
- > dry mouth and thirst
- > increased body temperature
- > nausea and anxiety
- > sweating
- > inability to sleep.

In high doses, a person can have hallucinations and feel confused and paranoid. After the effects wear off, users can feel very tired and sleepy. This can be followed by days of feeling depressed.



What is 'speed psychosis'?

One of the greatest problems experienced by speed users is amphetamine induced psychosis or 'speed psychosis'. This can happen when a lot of speed is used over a long period of time or even on rare occasions when a small amount is used irregularly. The chance of developing speed psychosis is far greater from using 'ice' as the drug is stronger.

Some of the symptoms may include:

- > hallucinations (hearing voices and seeing things that aren't there)
- > paranoia (e.g. feelings of being followed, feeling like people are plotting against you)
- > uncontrolled violent behaviour.

These symptoms usually disappear a few days or weeks after drug use is stopped.



Can someone become 'addicted' to amphetamines?

People can become addicted or dependent on amphetamines.

Many more people are now seeking treatment for their amphetamine use. Once amphetamine is used regularly a tolerance to the drug can be built up. This means that more and more of the drug is needed to get the same effect.

Are amphetamines in ADHD drugs?

Dexamphetamine is a type of amphetamine used to treat a condition called Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The drug helps people with ADHD to 'slow down' and to focus more effectively on activities. Dexamphetamine is not the only drug that is used to treat ADHD.

Another stimulant, Ritalin (methylphenidate hydrochloride), can also be used although this drug is not in the amphetamine family. Dexamphetamine and Ritalin are prescribed by doctors and can only be legally used by the person for whom the drug is prescribed.

E, eccy, XTC, pills, eggs.

What is ecstasy?

Ecstasy is an illegal drug that is synthetically manufactured. 'True' ecstasy is a substance known as MDMA (methylenedioxymethylamphetamine). Sometimes ecstasy tablets are stamped with well known names e.g. fashion designers, cartoon characters.

What is in ecstasy?

Ecstasy is often made in backyard laboratories and is not subject to any 'quality control'. Most often tablets sold as ecstasy contain methamphetamine instead of MDMA. Manufacturers also use other substances like ketamine, PMA, ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, caffeine, glucose, bicarbonate of soda or other household chemicals.



What are the effects of ecstasy?

The short term effects of using ecstasy may include:

- > euphoria and a feeling of wellbeing
- > feelings of increased closeness with others
- > increased self confidence
- > lack of inhibitions
- > tongue and cheek chewing
- > poor concentration
- > teeth grinding
- > dry mouth and thirst
- > increased body temperature
- > nausea and anxiety
- > sweating
- > inability to sleep.



After the ecstasy wears off the user may feel depressed, anxious and tired. This can last for a number of days.

Are there long term effects?

Little is known about the long term effects of ecstasy.

It is believed that some health problems may result from long term use, including:

- > memory and learning problems
- > depression.

Do some people die after taking ecstasy?

People have died after taking ecstasy. The majority of ecstasy-related deaths have not been caused from 'poisoning' by the drug but by a combination of using the drug and the circumstances in which it was used e.g. using it in a hot, crowded place may result in death by overheating or dehydration. A few people have also died from drinking too much water after taking ecstasy. When too much water is drunk the levels of salt and other minerals in the blood are diluted so much that it causes the brain to swell, which could lead to a coma and occasionally death.

Can someone become addicted to ecstasy?

Research is not clear on whether ecstasy is addictive. Some people do find that they are unable to control their use and have problems going without ecstasy.

Is it dangerous to mix drugs?

Mixing drugs (polydrug use) occurs when two or more drugs are used at the same time or on the same occasion. Examples include combining tobacco and alcohol, tobacco and cannabis, alcohol and medications, alcohol and ecstasy.

When drugs are mixed the effects may increase or they may produce different and unpredictable reactions. There is no risk-free way of mixing drugs.

Drugs obtained illegally may already contain one or more drugs. For example, ecstasy may contain a number of substances including MDMA, caffeine, ephedrine, amphetamine or codeine. This means that the user is already mixing drugs without even realising it.

What are the laws regarding cannabis, amphetamines and ecstasy?

Cannabis, ecstasy and amphetamines are illegal drugs. However, doctors may prescribe medications containing amphetamines to treat certain medical conditions. In all other cases in NSW it is against the law to:

- > possess, use or supply cannabis, amphetamines and ecstasy
- > cultivate (grow) cannabis plants
- > manufacture amphetamines or ecstasy.

Having equipment for using cannabis, such as bongs, is also against the law.

Young Offenders Act

Police have the option to divert young people aged 10 years and less than 18 years from going to court if they are caught with a small amount of an illegal drug. These matters can be dealt with by way of a:

- > formal warning (whether or not the young person admits to the offence)
- > caution (formal procedure often at a police station in the presence of a responsible person such as a parent where the young person is under 16 or an adult chosen by the young person if they are 16 or over)
- > youth justice conference (a forum where issues are discussed with the young person, parent/caregiver, other family members, police, health professionals or social workers, and others).

To receive a caution or be referred to a conference, the young person must admit to the offence and consent to the caution or conference. The option that police take will depend on the young person, prior offences and the seriousness of the drug offence. Police will be inclined to charge a young person for more serious drug offences e.g. sell or supply drugs, cultivate cannabis plants.

Cannabis Cautioning Scheme

The Cannabis Cautioning Scheme aims to give police an alternative to charging adult offenders apprehended for minor cannabis offences. It applies to people over 18 years of age who are caught with a small amount of cannabis for personal use or with equipment for the administration of cannabis. The caution contains legal advice and health information on cannabis use. A person can only receive two cautions, with a mandatory education session being a condition of the second caution.

Driving under the influence of drugs

It is illegal and dangerous to drive a motor vehicle whilst under the influence of drugs, including illegal drugs. It is also dangerous to be a passenger when the driver is affected by alcohol or other drugs.

The law relating to *Driving Under the Influence* applies not only to alcohol but also to other drug use including cannabis, amphetamines and ecstasy. Police can have a driver tested at a hospital for the presence of drugs in their blood or urine. They have the power to detain drivers suspected of being under the influence of drugs.