

## **Effects of Alcohol & Drugs**

Starting University can be an exciting time. It may be your first time away from home and with no parental supervision and temptations to try new experiences can be very strong. Making new friends and going out socialising is very much part of student experience. This guide is not meant to dampen your enthusiasm, just increase your awareness.

The chances are there will be occasions when you are exposed to alcohol and drugs. This guide describes the most commonly used depressants, stimulants and hallucinogenic drugs and the effects of taking them. Your own personal well-being and safety is important. We wish for you to enjoy your time at University and build good memories.

There is a section in this guide on the current Drug Laws and what to do in an emergency.

## **ALCOHOL – Depressant**

### **( Booze, Bevvies, Drink, Jars, Tinnies, Liquor )**

Many people like a drink now and then. Alcohol can help people relax and generally have a good time. Overdoing it, however, can have serious consequences. When drunk, people are more likely to have accidents, arguments or fights, and are more likely to have unprotected sex, putting themselves at risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

From mild hangovers and the shakes through to liver damage and 'delirium tremens' (or 'the DTs'), alcohol can affect the body and mind in a number of ways. Most common effects are dependent on consumption, age, gender, build etc, and include:

#### **Effects:**

- Feeling relaxed, with lowered inhibitions, reaction times and decision making affected.
- Emotional highs and lows, uncoordinated movement, blackouts and unconsciousness.
- Nausea and sickness.
- Slurred speech and unsteady gait.

#### **Risks:**

- Liver damage.
- Suffocation from inhalation of vomit when unconscious.
- Alcohol poisoning or, if mixed with drugs, overdose, leading to death.
- Social problems, violence and aggression.

#### **Limits and Guidelines:**

There are several factors affecting how much a person can drink namely, age, gender, body size, state of health and whether or not someone is taking medication. Health experts recommend the following:

**Men:** No more than 3-4 units of alcohol per day.

**Women:** No more than 2-3 units of alcohol per day. If pregnant, no more than 1-2 units once or twice a week.

**What is a unit?**

**1 unit** = ½ pint of ordinary strength lager, beer or cidar or a small (125ml) glass of wine or 1 measure (25ml) of spirit.

**The Law**

- In the UK it's illegal to buy alcohol if you're under 18.
- A male is probably over the legal limit for driving if he's had two pints of beer, three shots of spirits or three glasses of wine.
- A female is probably over the legal limit for driving if she's had one pint of beer, two shots of spirits or two glasses of wine.
- Being drunk at a football match is also an offence.

# **CIGARETTES/TOBACCO – Stimulant**

**( Cigs, Fags, Rollies, Snouts, Tabs, Sticks, Baccy )**

Tobacco leaves contain one of the most powerful poisons known to man – nicotine. Tobacco contains other substances such as tar, carbon monoxide, ammonia and cyanide, which are absorbed by the lungs. People smoke to relax, maintain performance (remember it is a stimulant), reduce stress or just to socialise.

## **Effects:**

- When nicotine reaches the brain it makes the head spin, people feel stimulated and alert.
- The heart beats faster.
- It reduces tension in muscles and seems to relieve stress.
- It seems to help improve concentration, and stave off boredom and fatigue.

## **Risks:**

- Heart disease, lung cancer, blood clots, heart attacks, bronchitis and irreversible damage to the pulmonary system i.e. the lungs and airways.
- Blood gets so sticky it can block arteries, which can lead to gangrene.
- Cancer of the mouth, throat, bladder, pancreas, kidney, cervix and the breast.
- Stomach and duodenal ulcers.
- If you are male, smoking can make your erection limper and lower your sperm count.

## **The Law:**

It's illegal for shopkeepers to sell cigarettes to someone who they know is under 16 years of age.

Since July 2007 it has been illegal to smoke in virtually *any* indoor public venue or workplace.

## **CLASS 'A' DRUGS**

### **Ecstasy – Stimulant & Mild Hallucinogenic**

( E, Love, Doves, Clarity, Adam, Disco Biscuits, Shamrocks, MDMA, X, XTC, New Yorkers, Dolphins, Diamonds, Dennis the Menace)

Effects: User feels alert, alive, in tune with their surroundings.  
Risks: Depression, overheating. Dehydration and Kidney problems.

**N.B. As from the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2005 Magic Mushrooms are classed as Class A drugs (possession, sale or supply).**

### **Cocaine – Stimulant**

(Coke, Charlie, Crack, Snow, Blow, Flake, Mojo, Snort, Toot, White Lady, Zip, Columbian Marching Powder)

Effects: Users feel alert, alive and confident.  
Risks: Addiction, fatigue and depression, heart problems and convulsions.

### **Crack Cocaine – Stimulant**

(Base, Ball, Cakes, Crack, Fatbags, Kryptonite, Rocks, Scrabble, Smoke houses)

Effects: Users feel alive, exhilarated, confident and wide awake. It kills all feelings of pain, tiredness and hunger.  
Risks: Addiction, hallucinations, mood swings, paranoia, convulsions and respiratory arrest. Transmission of hepatitis through sharing crack pipes.

## **Heroin – Depressant**

( H, Smack, Junk, Horse, Harry, Brown, Gravy, Skag,  
Meth, Juice)

Effects: Users feel warm, relaxed and drowsy.

Risks: Addiction, overdose, coma, death, transmission  
of HIV/AIDS via shared needle

## **LSD – Hallucinogenic**

(Acid, Blotters, Purple Haze, Fry, Tab, Gel, Dose, Pyramid,  
Microdots)

Effects: Users experience their surroundings differently,  
including distortions of sounds and colours.

Risks: Exacerbation of existing mental health  
problems, flashbacks, panic episodes.

## **Maximum penalties for Class 'A' Drugs**

**Possession: Seven years and/or a fine**

**Supply: Life imprisonment and/or a fine**

# **CLASS 'B' DRUGS**

## **Amphetamines – Stimulant**

(Speed, Whizz, Sulphates, Billy, Uppers, Base)

Effects: Users feel excited and confident.  
Risks: Fatigue, depression, panic attacks, hallucinations, heart strain.

## **Barbiturates – Sedative**

(Barbs, Downers, Reds, Candy, Goofballs, Peanuts, Rainbows)

Effects: Users can feel heavily sedated.  
Risks: Anaemia, dementia, seizures (during withdrawal).

## **Maximum penalties for Class 'B' Drugs**

**Possession: Five years and/or a fine**  
**Supply: Fourteen years and/or a fine**

# **CLASS 'C' DRUGS**

## **Cannabis – Hallucinogenic**

(Marijuana, Draw, Blow, Weed, Puff, Shit, Hash, Ganja)

Effects: Users feel relaxed and talkative.

Risks: Paranoia, anxiety and impaired concentration.

### **Maximum penalties for Class 'C' Drugs**

**Possession: Two years and/or a fine**

**Supply: Five years and/or a fine**

## **BE AWARE**

These are only general guidelines as penalties depend on various circumstances. Different police forces have different approaches/charges for similar offences, i.e. some may caution what others would prosecute for. The severity of the punishment also depends on whether the case goes to a Magistrates or Crown Court.

Remember a criminal record could affect your future employment. Some employers e.g. the Police Force, Armed Forces and some private sector companies are now doing urine drug tests as part of the interview process.

Other professions such as the medical, judicial and child care services would not even consider interviewing anyone with a criminal record related to controlled drugs.

## **REMEMBER**

The Police **CAN** stop and search you (but not an intimate search) if they have "reasonable suspicion" that you are in possession of a controlled drug.

If you are arrested your rights include:

- To speak to the custody officer
- To inform a relative or friend
- To seek legal advice from your own/duty solicitor in private

# **CLASSIFICATION OF DRUGS CONTROLLED BY THE MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT 1971**

## **CLASS A**

**Drugs include:** Heroin, Cocaine ( & Crack ), Ecstasy, LSD, Processed Magic Mushrooms, Morphine, Opium, Pethadine, Mescaline, Speed (prepared for injection), Coca leaf, Dicnol, Methadone, PCP, Poppy straw, Psilocybin, STP, any Class B drugs become Class A if they are prepared for injection.

## **CLASS B**

**Drugs include:** Amphetamine, Dexedrine, Mandrax, Barbiturates, Codeine in concentrations above 2.5%, DF118, Ritalin, and any Class B drug designed for injection count as Class A

## **CLASS C**

**Drugs include:** Methaqualone, Cannabis, Benzodiazepines (valium etc)

## **What to do in an emergency**

Some people who have experienced problems with drugs are only alive because their friends knew what to do in an emergency.

- Some drugs make people feel drowsy or even unconscious.
- Sometimes people become tense and panicky and may hyperventilate and feel sick and dizzy.
- Others may suffer from heat stoke or exhaustion.
- It's important that people keep hydrated when on drugs by drinking plenty of water but beware – some people on drugs have died from drinking too much water whilst others have died from drinking too little.

### **If someone is drowsy or unconscious**

- Ensure they have cool fresh air specially if they've taken ecstasy.
- Don't startle them (especially if they've been sniffing solvents).
- Don't throw water over them.
- Put them on their side in the recovery position.
- **Phone 999** and get an ambulance.
- Give a sample or tell ambulance crew what they have taken.

### **If someone is panicking**

- Talk quietly to them to calm them down and tell them they'll be OK.
- Keep them away from bright lights and loud noises.
- Stay with them until their panicky feelings go away.

### **National Drugs Helpline**

**Tel: 0800 77 6600** – open 24 hours a day for free confidential help and advice. [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

### **NHS Smoking Helpline**

**Tel: 0800 169 0169** [www.giveupsmoking.co.uk](http://www.giveupsmoking.co.uk)