

# Drugs

The following information will provide you with a basic understanding of the effects of illicit drugs:

## Marijuana/THC

- Buds, extracted oil, or resin of this plant can be smoked or cooked into food or made into pills and consumed orally
- Effects differ from one person to another (lasts 1-4 hrs)
- Creates feelings of relaxation, elevates mood, and can enhance sensory experiences
- Short-term side effects can include slowed thinking/reaction time, confusion, emotional distress, impaired balance, impaired learning and memory, lack of coordination, etc.
- Long term effects can include cough, respiratory infections, impaired memory and learning, increased heart rate, anxiety, panic attacks, difficulty sleeping, decreased testosterone and sperm count (in males), and abnormal periods and reduced ovulation (in females)
- Withdrawal symptoms include irritability, anxiety, decreased appetite, restlessness, sleep difficulty, and craving

## Illicit Stimulants (Cocaine & Methamphetamine)

- Stimulants are addictive substances that can be snorted, smoked, or injected
- Create sensations of energy, excitement, euphoria, talkativeness, and increased activity
- Short-term side effects can include increased heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, body temperature, decreased appetite, shakiness, cramping, anxiety, panic attacks, agitation/aggression/violence, visual and auditory hallucinations, and paranoia
- Single high doses of cocaine or methamphetamine can lead to seizures, sudden cardiac death, stroke, and death
- Symptoms of overdose include intense chest pain, extremely shallow, slowed, or stoppage of breathing, hyperthermia (intense fever), seizures, and unresponsiveness
- Long term effects can include irregular heartbeat, reduced appetite, tremors, loss of coordination, delirium, panic, paranoia, insomnia, aggression, brain damage, liver damage, chest pain, respiratory failure, nausea, seizures, and strokes
- When injected, there is an increased risk of infection (HIV and Hepatitis)
- Many methamphetamine users experience "crank sores" or skin wounds (picking at imaginary bugs crawling on skin -leads to scabs and infections)
- Withdrawal symptoms include depression, anxiety, irritability, paranoia, and violent outbursts
- Combining cocaine and alcohol forms a third substance by the liver called Cocaethylene which intensifies the effects of both drugs and increases risk of sudden death

## Prescription Stimulants (Adderall, Ritalin, etc.)

**\*\*Below info applies to when misused\*\***

- Pharmaceutical amphetamine that can be addictive and is taken orally, snorted, smoked or injected
- Create sensations of increased energy, focus, and euphoria (usually when taken non-orally)
- Short-term side-effects can include nervousness, restlessness, difficulty falling or staying asleep, mood swings, agitation, hand tremors, headache, dry mouth, loss of appetite, fast or pounding heartbeat, motor tics, psychosis, hives
- Signs of overdose include intense chest pain, extremely shallow, slowed, or stoppage of breathing, hyperthermia (intense fever), seizures, and unresponsiveness
- Long-term side effects can include damage to brain, blood vessels, liver, and kidneys, infectious diseases (if injected), damage to nose tissue (if snorted), malnutrition, disorientation, confusion, depression, paranoia, aggression, and seizures
- Withdrawal symptoms include fatigue, depression, agitation, and sleep disturbance
- Combined with alcohol, the depressant effects of alcohol may be blocked, resulting in consumption of potentially dangerous amounts of alcohol

## Heroin

- Highly addictive opiate drug made from morphine that can be injected, snorted, or smoked
- Creates sensations of euphoria (“rush”), sense of warmth, “nodding” (alternating between wakefulness and drowsiness)
- Short-term side effects can include shallow breathing, dry mouth, flushing of skin, heaviness of extremities, and clouded mental functioning, constipation, spontaneous abortion (for women), and gastrointestinal distress
- Signs of overdose include suppression of breathing, lack of oxygen to the brain, coma, brain damage, and death
- Long-term effects can include tolerance and dependence, liver or kidney disease and, if using a needle, abscesses, infectious diseases (HIV, hepatitis, etc.), collapsed veins, and infection of heart lining and valves
- Withdrawal symptoms include restlessness, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, and cold flashes
- Combined with alcohol or over the counter meds increases risk of overdose, convulsions, coma, and death

## Prescription Opiate Painkillers (Oxycontin, Vicodin, Percocet, Percodan, Tylox, Darvocet, Darvon, and more)

**\*\*Below info applies to when misused\*\***

- Prescription narcotic, opiate pain relievers that can be addictive
- Create a euphoric high similar to heroin

- Dependence can develop after only a few days of use
- Short-term physiological side effects can include constipation, nausea, headache, irregular breathing, dry mouth, vomiting, sweating, drowsiness, mental clouding, fatigue, anxiety, fear, and other mood changes
- Overdose symptoms include slow breathing, slow heart-rate, extreme drowsiness, small pupils, confusion, dizziness, clammy skin, seizures, loss of consciousness/fainting, muscle weakness, shallow breathing, blue lips, coma, and death
- Long term effects can include muscle breakdown, kidney failure, cardiovascular problems, increased heart rate, and blood pressure, body temperature, and depression
- Long-term usage from injection can cause cardiovascular damage, scarred/collapsed veins, risks of infections (HIV, hepatitis, etc.)
- Withdrawal symptoms include restlessness, muscle & bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, irritability, emotional distress, skin over-sensitivity
- Combined with alcohol or over the counter meds increases risk of overdose, convulsions, coma, and death

### Sedatives, Benzodiazepines (Xanax, Valium, etc.), Other Sleep-Inducing Drugs (Ambien, Lunesta, etc.), and GHB

**\*\*Below info applies to when misused\*\***

- Used as anti-anxiety medications, sleep aids, and to sedate for surgeries and can be highly addictive
- Create a sense of relaxation and reduction of anxiety
- Short-term side effects can include light-headedness, vertigo, drowsiness, slurred speech, muscle incoordination, impaired learning and memory (from a couple hours to more than a day), anxiety, nightmares, and aggression
- Overdose symptoms include shallow or stopped breathing, blurred vision, slurred speech, loss of reflexes such as blinking, gagging and reacting to painful stimulus, unresponsiveness, and death
- Long-term side effects can include mental deficits, delirium, memory impairment, depression, psychotic experiences, aggressive and impulsive behaviors
- Withdrawal symptoms include sleep disturbance, anxiety, tension, panic attacks, tremors, sweating, difficulty concentrating, nausea, weight loss, headache, auditory and/or visual hallucinations, and can lead to seizures, even death (Medical supervision is needed!!)
- Combined with other depressants (e.g., alcohol, opiates, benzodiazepines, etc.), can slow down the respiratory system to dangerous levels, increasing risk for convulsions, coma, or death

### Ecstasy/"Molly"/MDMA

- Synthetic, psychoactive drug with both stimulant and hallucinogenic properties
- Creates sense of euphoria, energy, alertness, enhancement of senses (especially touch), self-confidence, self-acceptance, and empathy for others

- Short-term side-effects can include muscle tension, involuntary teeth clenching, jaw pain, nausea, blurred vision, rapid eye movements, dizziness, chills, sweating, confusion, depression, anxiety, panic attacks, paranoia, psychotic episodes, and sleep problems
- Overdose symptoms include high blood pressure, increased body temperature, faintness, panic attacks, loss of consciousness, kidney failure, seizures, coma, and death
- Long term effects can include muscle breakdown, kidney failure, cardiovascular problems, increased heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, and depression
- Withdrawal symptoms include fatigue, loss of appetite, depression, and trouble concentrating
- Combined with alcohol may cause nausea, vomiting, coma, and death (particularly in active, hot environments). Also dangerous when combined with certain anti-depressants (MAO inhibitors).

### Hallucinogens (LSD/"Acid", Mushrooms/Psilocybin, PCP, Mescaline, Ketamine, Salvia, etc.)

- Drugs whose psychoactive properties alter one's perception, thoughts, and feelings, and can last from a very brief period to over 12 hours
- Creates perceptual distortions (altered shapes and colors), disorientation of sense of time, labile mood, depersonalization/out-of-body experiences, and mild sedation
- Short-term side effects can include anxiety and/or panic symptoms, fear of going insane, suicidal/homicidal ideation, flashbacks, and increased blood pressure, heart rate, and body temperature
- Overdose symptoms are rare and poorly understood. More dangerous than overdose symptoms are individuals acting on irrational thoughts experienced when under the influence.
- Long-term effects can include changes in brain chemistry, depression, other mood shifts, and symptoms of schizophrenia (known as *hallucinogen persisting perception disorder*). Though psychotic symptoms can occur following minimal use as well.
- Withdrawal symptoms are rare and poorly understood
- Combined with alcohol may intensify negative experiences (aka, "bad trips") and leave the user intoxicated and experiencing perceptual distortions, which can lead to very dangerous behavior

### Inhalants (nitrous oxide/"whippets", organic solvents, aerosol propellants, nitrates found in room deodorizers, etc.)

- Chemicals, often found in industrial or common household products, with various pharmacological effects when inhaled
- Create brief but intense bursts of euphoria and disinhibition
- Short-term side effects can include drowsiness, loss of consciousness, headaches, asphyxiation, seizures, coma, and death
- Overdose symptoms can include seizures, slurred speech, balance difficulties, blue lips, tremors, coma, vomiting, and choking
- Long-term effects can include muscle weakness; disorientation; lack of coordination; mood fluctuations; brain, heart, liver, kidneys, and lung damage; memory impairment, vision loss, and

hearing loss. Use while engaging in sexual activities can also lead to unsafe sexual practices, thus risking transmission of HIV and other STDs.

- Withdrawal symptoms can include nausea, loss of appetite, sweating, tics, sleep difficulties, and mood changes
- Combined with alcohol, they can dangerously lower blood pressure

### Hazards of Combining Alcohol and Other Drugs

- Alcohol (which is a depressant) + Other Depressants (heroin, Oxycontin, Vicodin, Xanax, Valium, etc.) - heart rate and respiration slows down, increased risk of coma, convulsions, and death
- Alcohol + Stimulants - can lead to nausea, vomiting, loss of consciousness, coma, and death
- Alcohol + Antihistamines - intensifies the sedative effects of the drugs
- Alcohol + Antidepressants - may lead to blood pressure problems, increases sedative effects of the antidepressant, and increases negative effect of alcohol on the liver (Using alcohol with certain anti-depressants (MAO inhibitors) can cause potentially fatal sudden increases in blood pressure, known as hypertensive crisis).