

## Vital Information Pack

for you or a friend



2010

# Introduction



This guide gives you the basic facts about drink, drugs and going out. Facts to help you have a good time when you're out at pubs and clubs and to help keep you safe.

Whether you are taking drugs, alcohol, medicines or herbal substances, this guide will tell you their effects, the risks you take, and how to deal with problems, whether they happen to you or a friend. You should know what the law says, what medics say, how to stay safe and how to come down safely.

This pack is for you and your friends. No myths. No hype. Just facts. Keep it handy - the First Aid information alone may just save someone's life. But please remember, we have space for only limited information - you can get more details from the agencies listed on page 35.

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Update prepared by Russell Webster March 2010

## Keeping safe on a night out



### **Before you go out**

- Know as much as possible about drugs and the risks if you take them.
- Clubs are hot, so wear cool clothes for dancing. Take warm clothes for queuing and going home.
- Eat something - food provides energy for dancing and lines the stomach. And remember to sip about a pint of water an hour when dancing non-stop. Any pub or club should provide you with tap water free of charge.
- Try and sort out how you're

getting home and who you'll be going with. Sorting out to leave with a mate before you go out can help ensure you both get home safely.

### **If you are going to take drugs...**

We need to make it clear that there are risks associated with taking any drugs, and the risks of taking any substance are unpredictable.

The typical effects and risks of taking different substances are listed under the specific drugs pages in this guide. See the table

of contents to find the drug you are interested in. This section gives general practical advice which applies to any drugs you might take.

### **Buying drugs**

Whether you buy your drugs from a dealer, a friend, off the Internet or from a Head Shop, the only thing you can be sure of is that you don't know what you're getting. Almost 2000 "Ecstasy" tablets were analysed at Glastonbury 2009 - less than 10% actually contained MDMA. Not only can drugs be fake, they can

also be stronger/purer than usual. The golden rule is to be guided by the reaction of your own body, not by what you think you've bought.

It's easy to end up making drugs a more central part of your life than you mean to – set a limit on the money you spend on drugs and try not to borrow from friends, and definitely avoid buying on credit from dealers.

### **Using drugs**

- If you are going to use drugs, make sure you are with

friends. It's not a good idea to be on your own - being with friends also helps when you come down.

- Always tell each other what you're taking, so if one of you runs into trouble of any sort, the others will know what to do. (See 'First Aid' page 65).
- The effects of drugs can vary according to where you are, who you're with, how you're feeling emotionally at the time and how physically fit you are. Also, the less you weigh, the more powerful the effect.

- Try not to mix drugs or take drugs with alcohol, the effects are hard to predict and often not what you expect. Be especially careful if you're taking prescribed drugs - you may accidentally produce reactions you're not prepared for.
- It's best to avoid drugs if you're feeling depressed or anxious - they often make you feel worse.
- If you are pregnant, you may experience effects from drugs you don't anticipate. It could also affect your baby.

The same applies if you are trying to get pregnant as drugs might affect your baby before you even know you are pregnant.

### **Staying safe, getting home**

- Remember, you can be much more vulnerable after taking drugs and you should make sure your mates look out for you. Many people are mugged or taken sexual advantage of when off their heads and you are more likely to have an accident on the way home.



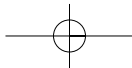
- Many drugs make you feel more confident or stimulated sexually, but always try to practise safer sex for obvious health reasons – to avoid sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection and an unwanted pregnancy.
- Don't drive. Alcohol and drugs affect your perceptions and reaction times - you could drive dangerously. Drug driving is just as illegal as drink driving. The police are looking out more for drivers using drugs and you could lose your licence or worse.

### Coming down

- Some people take different drugs to chill out, hoping to come down more gently. Mixing drugs can have serious health implications. Some people take heroin or tranquillisers for this purpose. This can be dangerous in two ways. First, your body needs to recover from any drugs and alcohol you have been taking. Secondly, it is very easy to start increasing the amount you use of these 'come down' drugs which are often more

addictive than many recreational drugs. Many people have ended up dependent in this way.

- Some drugs have effects that last well into the following day or even longer. Check the appropriate pages for details. As a general rule, it is wise to relax and give yourself time out the day after taking any drugs. If paranoia or anxiety occurs, being with good friends can help.



# Amphetamine and Methamphetamine



Speed  
Whizz  
Paste  
Sulph  
Crystal Meth  
Ice

## Taking speed and going out

Speed is a stimulant drug. It wakes you up and keeps you going. Its effects are like an adrenaline rush; your heart beats faster and you feel you have more energy. With speed, many people feel very confident and alert and feel they can dance for longer without resting.

Taking speed, your mouth will probably go dry and you may grind your teeth. Your appetite disappears and you won't want to sleep. Be aware that speed may make you feel that you are able to

drink more alcohol than you'd normally be able - this can be dangerous. The effects of a dose of speed can last for 6-8 hours and longer if you take meth or crystal meth.

The strength of speed varies considerably. It is the UK's least pure drug, typically only 5-10%.

Methamphetamine, known as Crank, Meth, Crystal Meth, Base or Ice is not a common drug on the UK scene. It comes in both a powder which is normally snorted and a crystal form which

is smoked. It causes similar problems to other forms of amphetamine but the effects last slightly longer. In the US, Australia and the Far East, methamphetamine has proven to be very addictive - in 2005 there were more people in treatment with meth problems in the States than for cocaine or heroin, although methamphetamine has become much less popular over the last three years.

The negative effects of speed can be serious, they include agitation, a fast heart rate, high blood

pressure, strokes, epileptic-like convulsions and a high body temperature.

### **The day after**

Ups bring downs. Speed makes your body work harder and use its resources faster. When speed wears off, you come down. A come down almost always makes you feel very tired. You will also probably feel anxious or panicky, depressed and perhaps even paranoid. If you have been drinking alcohol as well, the come down can be worse, with an increased risk of dehydration.

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, don't panic - it's how most people feel after taking speed; if the feeling of anxiety or depression continues for more than a day or two you should seek medical attention. Even after only a small amount, you may feel tired and hungry for a couple of days.

### **Using speed a lot**

Speed is a powerful drug and if you use it day after day - a speed 'run' - you may experience powerful sensations such as panic and persecution; you may hallucinate. These gradually

disappear over a number of days when you stop taking speed. It doesn't take long to build up a tolerance to speed - even using once a week for a few weeks can mean that you need more to get the same effects. It becomes very tempting to use more and more speed, but if you use a lot, you run a number of health risks. The main health risks are:

- Generally feeling weak and unwell and getting a lot of colds and bugs - your body is missing good food and sleep.
- High blood pressure and heart problems - if you have heart

or blood pressure problems, you should avoid speed.

- Mixing speed with other stimulant drugs - ecstasy, or cocaine - can put serious strain on your heart.

### **Staying safe**

As well as the general guidelines on pages 4-9:

- Avoid taking other stimulants.
- Avoid taking speed if you're on anti-depressants; they can interact and worsen the negative effects of speed.
- Avoid taking speed if you're pregnant, or trying to get

pregnant - medical research suggests amphetamines can damage your baby.

- Avoid taking more speed to put off coming down - you have to come down some time and the longer you leave it, the worse it will be.
- Avoid injecting speed - it is often cut with stuff that can cause a lot of damage.
- If you do inject, you may end up having to inject several times a day to maintain the high and prevent the come-down, make sure you get advice from your local drug project to avoid dirty hits,

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collapsed veins and infected sites.

- Avoid increasing the amount of speed you take - if you need more to get the same effect, take a break from it. You'll get the same effect from using less again. Remember, if you take a break from using any drug, your tolerance will drop, so if you start again, use a much smaller amount - or you might overdose.
- Make sure you get plenty of rest and food after a session on speed - arrange life so you're doing nothing the day after.

## Cannabis



Hash  
Weed  
Skunk  
Herb  
Ganja  
Blow  
Puff  
Spliff

### Taking cannabis and going out

Cannabis is a relaxant that changes the way you see the world - it can be hallucinogenic.

How people feel when they smoke - or eat - cannabis varies. Its effects on you will depend on how you are feeling before you take it, the environment you're in, and the strength of the resin or grass you take. Because cannabis is a natural substance, it's hard to predict its strength in advance. However, in recent years some powerful varieties have been developed and particularly strong

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ones are referred to as Skunk. They also contain very little cannabidiol which offsets some of the less pleasant effects of THC, the main active ingredient. There are an increasing number of herbal and man-made products – such as **'Spice'** on the market with cannabis-like effects. These have recently been made illegal. For further details see the section **'Recently illegal and soon to be illegal?'** on page 50.

When smoking cannabis, the effects are usually felt fairly

quickly. Although effects vary, most people feel relaxed and happy, possibly losing inhibitions and becoming very giggly. They often feel more aware of music and colour. But another common effect is to feel anxious and paranoid. Physical effects are bloodshot eyes, a dry mouth and slow reflexes.

Eating cannabis makes it hard to know when the effects will be felt – it may take 90 minutes. It is hard to predict how strong the experience will be or how long it will last.

### **Using a lot of cannabis**

Some of the health risks of using a lot of cannabis are linked to the tobacco it is normally smoked with. However, smoking cannabis by itself does cause damage to your chest and may contribute to getting bronchitis or lung cancer. It is common for people who use cannabis regularly over a long period of time to depend on it in social situations. Many long term users talk about feeling very lethargic generally and leading a much less active life and there is some suggestion that long-term

and/or high dose cannabis use can cause psychiatric problems.

### **Staying safe**

As well as the general guidelines on pages 4-9:

- Make sure you use it in small amounts to test the strength
- If you are eating cannabis, make sure you allow plenty of time for the effects to come on before eating any more, otherwise you may accidentally eat too much and have a bad trip.
- Some people avoid drinking

alcohol as it lessens the effect of the cannabis and can cause you to feel sick, dizzy, anxious or claustrophobic. It makes some people throw up.

- Make sure you tell a friend if you are feeling anxious or paranoid in a club and get them to take you to the chill out room or outside.
- If you use skunk, you will get a more powerful effect and of course the potential unpleasant reactions will also be more powerful.



## Cocaine



Coke  
C  
Charlie/  
Charles  
Snow  
Crack  
Rocks  
Stones

Crack is cocaine powder converted to its free base form - a rock which is normally smoked. Everything in this section applies equally to cocaine powder and crack.

### **Taking cocaine and going out**

Cocaine is a powerful stimulant drug with very strong effects on both body and mind. Cocaine increases the heart rate, raises the blood pressure and may produce a dry mouth. You may feel a strong urge to drink or smoke, but probably won't want to eat or sleep. Some people feel

sick, irritable or aggressive. The higher the dose, the more pleasurable the feelings, but the greater the risk of negative effects.

The strength of cocaine powder can vary wildly from as little as 5% to 40%

Crack produces a rapid, intense high which lasts for about 2 minutes. This is followed by a less intense, but pleasurable feeling which lasts for about another 20 minutes. Taking crack may make you feel - for the brief

period of time the effects last - that you're having the best time of your life and that you are sexually very potent.

The negative effects that can occur with cocaine and crack can be very severe and include heart attacks, strokes, epileptic-like convulsions and a high body temperature leading to liver and kidney problems.

#### **After effects**

With crack, the short intense high is followed by a long low or crash. The more you take, the longer

and more intense the crash.

What goes up must come down. Cocaine makes your body work faster and use up its resources quicker. When it wears off, you come down. A come down almost always involves feeling exhausted and hungry. You will also probably feel anxious or panicky, depressed or even paranoid.

#### **Using cocaine a lot**

Regular cocaine use is linked to several physical problems including heart conditions. Because it stops people feeling

hungry, cocaine can make them vulnerable to malnutrition. Snorting cocaine damages the nasal passages and smoking crack can cause black phlegm, chest pain, lung damage and bronchitis.

This is a drug which is difficult to control and long term use can have a powerful effect on mental health resulting in a range of conditions from mild depression and anxiety to the extremes of cocaine psychosis with symptoms similar to schizophrenia.

### Staying safe

As well as the general guidelines on pages 4-9:

- Avoid taking other stimulants.
- Avoid mixing with alcohol - alcohol can potentially increase the adverse effects of cocaine on the heart.
- When substances are snorted, tiny capillaries in the nose burst, sharing straws or noses can pass blood-borne infections such as Hepatitis B or even HIV. Use your own snorting tool.
- In the same way, regular

crack users often find their lips get dry and chapped, this can cause lips to bleed and infections can be passed.

- Have your own pipe and try not to share it, no matter how nicely you are asked.
- Avoid taking more cocaine or crack to put off coming down. You have to come down some time and the longer you leave it, the worse it will be. Don't be tempted to take heroin or benzos as a way of taking the edge off your come down, this is a very easy way to develop an addiction to another drug.

- Make sure you get plenty of rest and food after taking cocaine - don't plan anything strenuous for the day after.
- Resist the temptation to have another hit the morning after as a pick-me-up, this can be a first step towards changing social, recreational use into problem use.
- Avoid injecting. Cocaine and crack can anaesthetise the injecting site, making it hard to get a clean hit. If you do inject, get safer injecting advice from your local drug project. Never share injecting equipment.



# Ecstasy



E  
Pills

## Taking ecstasy and going out

Ecstasy (MDMA) is both a stimulant - it speeds up your body system - and a mood changing drug, which alters how you see the world.

Its effects can vary considerably, depending on how you feel when you take it, who you are with and where you are and how much you have taken previously. Effects also vary according to what you take. There's a whole range of drugs sold as ecstasy, such as MDEA and MDA and different piperazines and cathinones (see

page 51). This means that it's almost impossible to know what you are taking - both the effects and how strong those effects are will vary widely. In 2009, only a minority of Ecstasy tablets actually contained MDMA.

Sometimes MDMA is seen in powder or crystalline form. This is believed to be stronger and purer than traditional tablets. As it is dabbled or snorted, the hit comes on quickly and is more intense - it also makes it harder to work out how much you have taken.

The effects can combine feeling both stimulated and relaxed as well as being totally in tune with other people. Around 20 minutes to an hour after taking ecstasy, you are likely to feel hot and sweaty, have a dry mouth and grind your teeth. Your heart beats faster and you lose your appetite. People often feel things more intensely. In a club you are likely to really lock into the music and many people warm to others. But experiences vary and some people feel anxious and even paranoid. Effects tend to be at their strongest during the first

two hours, but can last for several hours at a lesser intensity. Complications of ecstasy use include feeling agitated, high heart rate, high blood pressure, a stroke and a high body temperature. These complications can lead to severe liver and kidney problems.

#### **After-effects**

In the five year period up to early 2009 there were just over 200 reported deaths in the UK where ecstasy use was implicated, often alongside other drugs.

Despite the level of media coverage, the number of ecstasy-related deaths remains small in comparison to deaths from heroin and cocaine.

Ecstasy decreases the feeling of tiredness and thirst. Since you naturally get very hot dancing all night in a sweaty club, it is easy to become so dehydrated that you overheat and collapse. See 'Staying safe' below.

Because ecstasy is a stimulant, the come down is like speed. Once your mood is no longer

artificially elevated, you may sink into anxiety and depression. You will experience how tired and hungry you really are. Awkward situations can be hard to handle and make you panic or paranoid.

#### **Using Ecstasy on a regular basis**

Long term frequent users find that they need more ecstasy to get off, but even then the effect is not as good. Using it often, you may get run down from exhaustion resulting in colds, sore throats and flu. Women may find they get infections like cystitis and thrush. The more

ecstasy you use, the worse the come down effects.

#### **Long term effects**

Researchers have found evidence that high doses of ecstasy damages the brains of animals. Some studies have shown that this also applies to humans, and may lead to mental health problems later in life. Your short term memory may be affected.

### Staying safe

As well as the general guidelines on pages 4-9:

- Make sure you feel fit and rested in the first place. Ecstasy puts a lot of strain on the heart, liver and kidneys.
- Even if you're a regular E user, take small amounts at first to test the strength, you can always take more later. Even what looks like the same pill bought from the same person can be twice as strong this week as it was last.
- Be wary of buying MDMA powder from a stranger as some users have been sold something completely different with very different effects.
- Make sure when you're dancing non-stop that you drink around a pint of fluid (not alcohol) an hour to replace fluid lost by sweating. Isotonic sports drinks replace lost body salts very effectively. If you're not dancing, you don't need so much fluid - it can be harmful to drink to excess.
- Make sure you rest often and use the chill out area.
- Avoid taking other drugs, including alcohol, because it dehydrates you.
- Avoid taking more ecstasy once the initial effects have worn off - this strains your system and makes coming down worse.
- Avoid taking ecstasy if you're on anti-depressants.
- Avoid taking ecstasy if you suffer from epilepsy, have a heart disease or sickle cell disease.
- Avoid increasing the amount of ecstasy you take - if you need to take more to get the same effect as the last time, take a break from it. Remember, if you take a break from using any drug, your tolerance will drop, so if you start again, use a much smaller amount - **or you might overdose.** Avoid taking Ecstasy if you are on medication for HIV-related conditions (retro-viral medicines), they react very badly together and can be life-threatening.

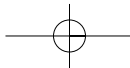


**Remember: water is not an antidote to ecstasy. It just helps prevent dehydration, and drinking too much water can be as dangerous as not drinking enough.**

#### **Sorting out a problem**

If someone gets anxious or panicky in a club, calm them by talking in a quiet and reassuring way, move them away from the music and lights and seek medical help.

**See more information on First Aid on page 65**



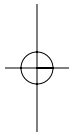
GHB/GBL



GHB  
GBL  
G  
Gina

#### **Taking GHB/GBL and going out**

Essentially a downer, a small dose - a small capful - of GHB or GBL will make you feel relaxed and uninhibited if you're feeling good to start with; or more down and miserable if you're feeling low when you take it. With larger doses, you risk unpleasant effects such as feeling and being sick and disorientation. People have had fits and collapsed. As well as causing collapse, GHB can cause coma and decrease breathing. Coma and vomiting is a dangerous combination as you



can choke on your vomit and die. GHB/GBL is normally found in liquid form, which makes it difficult to control the amount taken, be very careful not to take too much. GBL is converted in the body to GHB and causes very similar effects to GHB.

Effects kick in after 10 minutes to an hour and last for up to a day. The strength of GHB/GBL varies a lot. If you use it, take a small amount and wait at least an hour before taking more - it might be stronger than you or your friends have taken before. You may feel

lacking in energy afterwards for hours or even days. Be careful as badly made GHB can really burn your mouth.

Avoid taking GHB with alcohol or any other 'downer', you greatly increase the risk of overdose and the effect you get is very unpredictable.

### Staying safe

As well as the general guidelines on pages 4-9:

- The biggest problem with taking GHB is the 'steep dose/response curve', people keep sipping a little bit more and go straight from having mild effects to being unconscious. There is no guaranteed way of avoiding this. However, you should take very small amounts and wait at least an hour without any effects before taking any
- more. Drinking alcohol definitely makes passing out much more likely. So don't drink if you are planning to take G.
- GHB can cause severe breathing problems, so don't take it if you have asthma or any other respiratory condition.
- Vomiting can also occur if you take too much GHB/GBL, and this can be more dangerous if you are drowsy and then start vomiting.
- Most users recover fully and quickly if they go into a

GHB-induced coma, but GHB-induced coma can be dangerous and individuals who are unconscious after taking GHB need urgent hospital assessment. There have been an increasing number of deaths in the last few years. Just because you survive a coma once, doesn't mean you will do so next time.

- **If someone collapses after taking G, you MUST call an ambulance immediately; you don't want to be responsible for someone's death. It is vital to put them in the recovery position (page 66) while you are waiting for the ambulance.**



## Heroin



Smack  
Brown  
Gear  
Skag  
H

### Taking heroin and going out

Heroin is a strong painkiller, well known for its addictive properties, so be cautious.

Street heroin usually comes as a brown powder, and is snorted, smoked in a joint, smoked on foil (chasing), or injected. The first use may make you vomit, this is followed by a feeling of well being and distance from worries. Users may become so sedated that they appear to be asleep.

Heroin is not a drug generally

associated with going out, although some people use it as a chill out drug. Using heroin to help you come down is very risky, it is much more addictive than many recreational drugs. Many people have ended up dependent in this way.

**Remember - you can get addicted even if you only ever smoke it.**

The negative effects of heroin can be very serious, drowsiness and coma and stopping breathing.

### **Staying safe**

As well as the general guidelines on pages 4-9:

- Heroin addiction does not happen instantly, watch for your use increasing, dependency can creep up on you. It is best not used to come down after a hectic night.
- Many of the health risks with heroin come from injecting, but smoking can lead to chest problems.
- If you inject heroin, it is vital that you do not share any

equipment, as blood borne viruses like Hepatitis and HIV are passed on easily, seek advice from a local drug agency.

- Be aware that heroin may contain impurities, strength can vary and injecting heroin carries a risk of overdose.
- Avoid drinking alcohol with heroin, it greatly increases the risk of overdose.



# Ketamine



K  
Special K

## Taking ketamine and going out

Ketamine is an animal and human anaesthetic. It is usually supplied as a powder or as crystals.

It detaches people from their environment, and some users report being unable to move or speak while being fully conscious and able to see what is going on. For these reasons, it is important to be cautious the first time you use it.

Ketamine's hallucinogenic and painkilling effects come on within

about 30 seconds if it is snorted, and a few seconds if injected, sometimes Ketamine is combined with MDMA type drugs and sold in pills as E. It is also found in liquid form, when it is difficult to predict its strength.

Some say that the first effects are of physical numbness, and a rush combined with hallucinations and out of body sensations. People have described weird trips believing the hallucinations to be real. Ketamine taken in high doses may produce difficulty in co-ordination and speech. It's

very easy to injure yourself because you won't feel the pain straight away.

Other people report a feeling of temporary paralysis, slurring their words and feeling sick especially if they have eaten a few hours before using.

Regular ketamine use can damage the lining of the bladder resulting in considerable pain, an increased need to urinate and/or passing blood in the urine. The damage can be permanent and require surgery. If you experience

these symptoms, stop using ketamine and seek medical advice – whatever you do, don't continue to use ketamine to ease the pain.

### Staying safe

As well as the general guidelines on pages 4-9:

- Be careful how much Ketamine you take - it is a very different drug from speed or ecstasy.
- Avoid taking Ketamine anywhere where it could be

dangerous if you fall - because it's an anaesthetic, you won't know you're hurt. People burn themselves when smoking after taking K.

- Make sure you understand you may have a very strong trip and your body will feel numb in what may be a frightening and unpleasant way.
- Make sure you have friends who know you've taken it and will look out for you. It is very easy to rob or take sexual advantage of someone who has taken Ketamine.

- Make sure you are feeling fit and well physically and emotionally before you take Ketamine; your body and mind need to be strong to cope with it.
- Avoid mixing Ketamine with other drugs, especially alcohol. If you drink, it is very difficult to judge how much Ketamine to take without falling into a 'K-hole' – a semi-comatose state.



# LSD, Mushrooms and other hallucinogens



Acid  
Tabs  
Trips  
Microdots  
Liberty Cap  
Fly Agaric  
Shrooms

## Hallucinogens

LSD, Magic Mushrooms and less common drugs which make you hallucinate – such as 2CB and DMT – are all dealt with in this section because their effects are similar.

### Taking hallucinogens and going out

LSD is a powerful hallucinogenic drug often known as 'acid' or 'trips' and usually comes on a '**tab**' (a small square of paper impregnated with the drug). It affects the way you see things and feel about the world. LSD

may be found as a liquid in containers like those used for breath freshener.

Magic Mushrooms are mushrooms which grow in the wild that produce similar effects to LSD when you eat them. There are two main types and they are both different.

The most common form is Liberty Cap (*Psilocybe semilanceata*). Some species of magic mushrooms look almost the same as deadly poisonous ones – if you don't know what you're

picking, don't eat them. After picking, they're either eaten raw or dried out and stored.

As with all drugs, people's experience of hallucinogens tends to be very individual. However the added problem is that with both LSD and mushrooms, it's impossible to tell how strong they are until after you've taken it. Indeed some people can experience much stronger effects than others, even when they take the same substance.

The effects of acid are normally felt about 20 minutes to two hours after taking it. If you are not used to it, you may not realise you are affected for some time. The effects are known as a **'trip'** and can last anywhere from five to 24 hours, though 8-12 hours is most common.

As the trip starts to come on, you may feel exhilarated or agitated; you may want to dance or laugh a lot. The drug affects perception. Familiar objects and even people may appear unfamiliar and strange. The trip tends to get

more intense after two to four hours; sight, hearing and touch often become very sensitive and distorted. The experiences may be pleasurable or upsetting.

If you are tripping in a club, you may experience a great place full of happy, dancing people; or you may find the music and lights and crowds very frightening.

The effects of mushrooms are very similar to the effects of LSD except that they may make you vomit. The effects for both types of mushrooms can take between

30 minutes to two hours to happen. The strongest part of the trip takes 4-10 hours and the after-effects usually last a further 2-6 hours. The more you take, the longer your trip could last. Generally fresh mushrooms are stronger than dried ones.

The main risk is eating poisonous mushrooms which could prove fatal. If you have a mental health problem such as paranoia or schizophrenia, mushrooms can give you a very bad time and complicate the problems you already have. As with all

hallucinogens, make sure you are in a safe place with friends. It is quite common to vomit and have stomach pains after taking mushrooms.

### Staying safe

As well as the general guidelines on pages 4-9:

- There are no known physical dangers associated with the use of LSD, (though it's easy to have an accident) nor any proof of brain damage. However, users may experience flashbacks days or

even weeks after taking acid, when elements of their trip are experienced again as if they are happening in the present.

- There are psychological risks. Depressed or anxious people will probably find that taking acid makes life feel even more chaotic and confused. Anyone with a history of mental illness may find that hallucinogens aggravate existing problems.

## Poppers



Amyl  
Rush  
TNT  
Rock  
Hard  
Kix  
Liquid Gold

### Taking poppers and going out

Isopropyl nitrite - generally known as poppers - dilate veins and arteries, making blood flow faster through the heart and brain.

Poppers used to contain isobutyl nitrite but consumer protection legislation banned its sale because it was suspected to cause cancer - no-one knows whether the new formula poppers might have the same effect.

Most people experience a rush

immediately after sniffing poppers. After the initial rush, you may feel light-headed for a few minutes. Some people report less pleasant feelings - pounding headaches, dizziness and a flushed face.

### **Poppers and sex**

Poppers are often used during sex, as a stimulant and muscle relaxant. Poppers used in conjunction with Viagra can massively decrease your blood pressure and can even be fatal.

### **Staying safe**

As well as the general guidelines on pages 4-9:

- Make sure you take a break from poppers if you experience unpleasant sensations - headaches, swelling of the nasal passages, skin problems - or if they lose their effect.
- Wash liquid off immediately if it gets on the skin as it causes skin rashes.
- Avoid holding poppers in your mouth - if someone accidentally swallows

poppers, get medical help immediately - this can cause severe problems.

- Avoid taking other drugs - especially stimulants (speed, ecstasy, cocaine) - which will put too much strain on your heart.
- Avoid using poppers if you have heart trouble or breathing problems, anaemia or glaucoma.
- Never smoke when using poppers - they can go up in flames.



## Recently illegal and soon to be illegal



In recent years, there has been a great increase in products sold as legal drugs. Sometimes these are herbal and sometimes synthetic. As soon as a new substance that has harmful effects becomes popular, steps are taken to make it illegal. See the section on drugs and the law on page 58.

On 23 December 2009, GBL, man-made cannabis-like substances (such as **'Spice'**) and BZP and drugs like it (artificial stimulants) were all made illegal under changes to the Misuse of Drugs Act. Even when substances aren't specifically mentioned in this Act, they are often

illegal under other legislation.

There are too many products to discuss here and even products which seem very similar may be completely different in terms of their strength, effects and how long they last for. It should be borne in mind that many of these products, although marketed as natural, contain substances never designed to be consumed by humans.

However, it may be useful to have some brief information on three of the most common families of these new drugs.

## Piperazines

BZP  
TFMPP  
CPP

These are all piperazines and all illegal since December 2009. They are stimulants much like amphetamine and ecstasy (see pages 10 and 24) and the negative effects that can occur are similar to those for amphetamine and ecstasy. They are often found in tablets that may be sold as ecstasy and bearing the same logos as ecstasy tablets.

## Cathinones

MeOW  
Mcat  
Bubbles  
Mephedrone

Cathinones are synthetic chemicals related to the natural compounds found in the Khat plant. They are also stimulants with effects like amphetamine, and the negative effects that can occur are similar to those for amphetamine. They are often sold on the internet as a white powder in small ziplock bags.

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## Herbal highs

Spice  
Sence  
Magic

These are smoking mixtures that have chemicals added to them. They have a similar effect to cannabis although they may be stronger and may have either a shorter or much longer lasting effect than cannabis. They are illegal with the same penalties for use or dealing as cannabis. Because there are so many

different goods on sale, it is not possible to be clear about the risks associated with them, but the negative effects are likely to be similar to cannabis.

## Staying safe

As well as the general guidelines on pages 4-9.

The best advice is to treat them like any other unknown drug:

- Take only small amounts and wait at least an hour before taking more if you don't seem to have any effect
- Don't mix them with alcohol or other drugs
- Avoid driving after use

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## Mixing your drugs



There's no way to predict accurately how a combination of drugs will affect any individual. Drug interactions are complex. Taking two different stimulants may be much more powerful and have a different effect from taking twice the amount of one drug. The best advice is not to mix any drugs - and that definitely includes alcohol or prescription drugs.

However, if you do take more than one drug a night, the most important thing is to remember what you take when and to allow

time for the effects to kick in and wear off. Not only is this much safer, but it also means you're more likely to get the effect you intended. Remember all the times you have a smoke of cannabis or a dab of speed - the effects are cumulative and they'll mount up.

### **Key things to remember:**

- Give the first drug plenty of time to kick in or wear off before taking another one.
- If you don't feel comfortable don't take more to make

yourself better.

- Look out for your mates - you'll probably spot the signs they are in trouble quicker than they will.
- If you weigh less than your friends, bear in mind that any drugs or alcohol will have more effect on you than on heavier people - adjust your intake accordingly.
- Recreational drugs can react badly with ordinary medicines that you have bought in a pharmacy or been prescribed by a doctor. There can be two types of reactions: the

negative effects of the recreational drugs are greater and/or the drugs that you are taking for a medical condition become less effective.

- Don't just take the same amount of drugs as your friends – some will have potentially used different amounts in the past and therefore will be able to tolerate taking more than you can.

Smoking strong cannabis such as skunk to take the edge off ecstasy is unlikely to work; you'll probably get stronger feelings of anxiety and paranoia and may experience upsetting sensations. If you use alcohol to come down from taking drugs, remember that alcohol dehydrates you. It really is important to drink non-alcoholic fluids as well - you'll feel much better the next day.

Try not to put off coming down. The longer you put it off, the worse it will be. In particular, avoid using heroin or

benzodiazepines like Valium or Temazepam to take the edge off your come down from your main drug. You are just using more drugs which are much more physically addictive than ecstasy, speed or acid. There's a real danger that you can easily extend your drug taking to become a daily need rather than a party experience. The best way to come down is naturally, with rest and relaxation, replenishing your body with food and fluids.



## The Law - A brief guide



### **Caution**

This is a complex area where we can only provide general guidelines. Anyone in difficulties with the law should get legal advice at the earliest opportunity by contacting their solicitor or Release (Helpline 0845 4500 215 [ask@release.org.uk](mailto:ask@release.org.uk))

The important thing to remember is that just because a substance is not covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, it doesn't mean it's legal. There is much more legislation (including the

Medicines Act) and what is illegal changes all the while. On 23 December 2009, GBL, man-made cannabis-like substances (such as 'Spice'), BZP and artificial stimulant drugs related to it, and anabolic steroids were all made illegal.

### **The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971**

There are a number of laws and regulations affecting the possession, supply and trafficking of illegal drugs. The most important is the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 which has been updated regularly over the last 40

years. This law sets out which drugs are 'controlled' and outlines the range of offences and penalties the courts can apply for each. The Act places controlled drugs into three classes; A, B and C. These classes dictate how serious the penalty can be for a crime involving a drug in that category.

### **Class A:**

includes heroin, LSD, ecstasy, cocaine, methamphetamine, magic mushrooms and any Class B drug prepared for injection.

**Class B:**  
includes speed, cannabis  
and 'Spice'.

**Class C:**  
Many prescribed drugs such as  
tranquillisers, GHB and GBL,  
Ketamine and anabolic steroids  
are now Class C drugs.

Please note that  
**Cannabis is now a Class B drug.**

**The main offences**

The most common offence is  
possession of a controlled drug.  
This includes shared possession

of a common pool of drugs and  
past possession, when past drug  
use is admitted.

More serious offences are supply  
and intention to supply.  
Remember, supply includes  
giving or selling drugs to a friend,  
or even looking after them for  
someone else. People who say,  
"the drugs were not all for me,  
some were for a friend" are not  
making things better for  
themselves. The heaviest  
penalties under the law concern  
the import and export of large  
amounts of controlled drugs.

Cultivation of cannabis is also an  
offence. Penalties are more  
severe if the court believes  
cultivation was intended to  
supply others.

**Prosecution and punishment**

There are many factors to take  
into account in deciding the  
punishment for any particular  
offence. The starting point is the  
Misuse of Drugs Act, which sets  
out the maximum sentences for  
drug offences depending on the  
offence and the class involved.

This booklet cannot cover all the

permutations but in summary,  
for possession of a Class C drug  
the maximum penalty is 2 years  
imprisonment or a fine or both.  
The maximum penalty for  
supplying Class C drugs is 14  
years imprisonment or a fine or  
both. The punishments are more  
severe for offences relating to  
Class A and B drugs.

Although maximum sentences  
are rare, prison sentences are  
common. Many aggravating and  
mitigating factors can operate,  
such as the amount of the drug  
involved, whether it was a first

offence or not and the defendant's character.

Finally, the local police and prosecution policies where offences are committed are very important. Some police forces automatically caution first time offenders with small amounts of drugs. Others tend to always prosecute. There's a wide variation across the UK and it's impossible to generalise. Even if a first time offender with a small quantity of drugs for personal use is simply cautioned or fined, it shouldn't be taken lightly since

it can affect that person's future career. Lots of job applications ask about any criminal convictions. Also several countries, including the USA, may refuse you entry.

#### **Drugs and driving**

Under the Road Traffic Act 1988 it is an offence to drive or be in charge of a motor vehicle when unfit through drink or drugs. If guilty of driving when unfit, there's a compulsory 12 months' disqualification and a fine. In cases involving accidents or other aggravating circumstances, then

longer disqualifications, stiffer fines and imprisonment can apply. The consequences are the same whether you are driving under the influence of drink or drugs. The police now have the power to test you for drugs at the roadside, the same as you can be asked to blow into a breathalyser for alcohol.

#### **Know your rights**

Remember: you can be stopped and searched if the police have reasonable suspicion that you are in possession of a controlled drug.

If you are arrested, don't panic, you cannot be locked up indefinitely. If in doubt - consult a solicitor.



## Useful Contacts



### Legal and welfare advice

**Release**  
Help Line.  
0845 4500 215  
ask@release.org.uk

### Drug Information

**Talk to FRANK**  
0800 776600 –  
24 hour free, friendly  
and confidential  
advice and information  
on drugs and where  
to get help.  
frank@talktofrank.com

### Drug Information Websites

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

[www.erowid.org](http://www.erowid.org)

[www.release.org.uk](http://www.release.org.uk)

[drugfucked.tht.org.uk/](http://drugfucked.tht.org.uk/)  
For gay and bisexual  
men

[www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)  
For families and  
friends concerned  
about someone's  
drug use.

## First Aid



### Getting help in the club

Good clubs have at least one First Aider or paramedic who knows about drugs. Ask a staff member for the First Aider and if you have trouble, demand to see the manager.

**If in doubt, always ask for an ambulance to be called - do it yourself if necessary.**

If you know, tell the First Aider or paramedic what drugs have been taken. They are not interested in legalities, but want to help your friend, so the drug information is vital.

If someone collapses on the dance floor. Put the person in the recovery position, then send for help immediately.

## Recovery Position

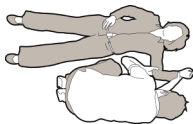
If the person is breathing, turn them on to their front, with their head sideways. Bend their upper arm and leg. Straighten the other arm parallel to their back. Either stay with them, asking stewards to clear a space or, if possible, move them, still in the recovery position, to a quieter place.

If they are not breathing, and you know how to do mouth to mouth resuscitation, do so. If not, wait until someone arrives who does. In the meantime, put them in the recovery position.

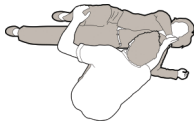
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## Recovery Position for a breathing casualty

- 1**
- Place arm nearest to you at a right angle, with palm facing up.



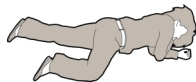
- 2**
- Move other arm as shown, keeping the back of their hand against their cheek.
  - Get hold of knee furthest from you and pull up until foot is flat on the floor.



- 3**
- Pull the knee towards you, keeping the casualty's hand pressed against their cheek.
  - Position the leg at a right angle.



- 4**
- Make sure that the airway remains open by tilting the head back, then checking breathing by feeling and listening for breath.



- 5**
- Call 999 if necessary. Monitor until help arrives.

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### **Recognising Heat Exhaustion, Heat Stroke and Overheating**

It is not just being hot. Symptoms could include any or many of the following:- dizziness, feeling sick, sudden tiredness, sudden headache or cramps, particularly in the arms and legs. Peeing is difficult and it's dark in colour. Sweating may stop, which is a strong signal of dangerously increasing body heat. Blackouts, collapsing, fits or fainting can follow.

### **A very high body temperature can lead to life-threatening problems.**

Anyone suffering from any of these symptoms should immediately take a break, cool down in the quieter area or chill out room and sip about a pint of water slowly. Gulping down a great deal of water should be avoided. (As a general rule, when dancing, sip about a pint of water per hour.) If your body gets back to normal temperature, try to find dry or warmer clothes or a blanket - don't over chill.

If you are concerned that someone has heat exhaustion, get them assessed in the club first aid room and have their body temperature checked.

**If the body temperature is very high, an ambulance should be called as this is a medical emergency.** Cool or tepid water splashed on the head and neck help with cooling down, as will wrapping them in cool damp towels. Loosen tight clothes and remove hats or other headgear.

**If the symptoms persist, get help and call an ambulance.**

### **Anxiety/bad trips**

If someone gets very anxious after taking drugs, then:

- Take them to a quiet place away from music, bright lights and crowds
- Talk to them calmly and reassure them that their feelings will pass

If they are hyper-ventilating (breathing fast and shallow), get them to relax and take long, slow breaths. **If hyper-ventilation persists, get help and call an ambulance.**

### Other serious problems

- Any **chest pain** is potentially serious in people who have used drugs. If it persists for more than a few minutes or you have any other **get them assessed in the club first aid room or call an ambulance.**
- Drugs can cause people to have epileptic-like convulsions, even if they don't have a history of epilepsy. **Anyone who has a convulsion should be assessed in the club first aid room or seen in hospital.**
- Drugs can cause people to have a stroke. This can result

in difficulty with movement of the face / arms / legs, difficulty speaking or understanding you when you speak to them. If any of these occur **call an ambulance without delay.**

- Drugs can cause lots of other problems – if you or one of your friends is unwell after taking drugs it is best to seek medical attention. **Be honest about what you have taken** - doctors have a duty of confidentiality and will not report you to the police for taking illegal substances.

This is the fourth version of the Vital Information Pack which has proved so popular that approximately 300,000 have been distributed across London.

This guide is brought to you by the London Drug Policy Forum.

Written by Russell Webster  
With the expert advice and contributions of Dr Paul Dargan, David MacKintosh, John Ramsey, Dr David Wood and Ian Graham.

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