

What are drugs?

- A drug is something that affects your body. Drugs must be able to pass through the body and into the brain; interferes with brain's neurotransmitters
- Not all drugs are illegal.
- Drugs like cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine are illegal. Other drugs which are against the law include speed, heroin, LSD and magic mushrooms.
- Many are legal like alcohol, headache tablets, cigarettes and glue (inhalents).
- In certain countries legal drugs can only be given out by doctors. Usually doctors give you a prescription to take to the pharmacy.

Types of Drugs

3 Main Types:

1. **Depressants** slow down, or depress, the functions of the central nervous system. In moderate doses, depressants can make you feel relaxed. In larger doses, depressants can cause unconsciousness by reducing breathing and heart rate. A person's speech may become slurred and their movements sluggish and uncoordinated.

These can include:

- alcohol;
- opiates and opioids (heroin), morphine, codeine, methadone and buprenorphine;
- cannabis or marijuana;
- minor tranquilizers diazepam such as Valium, oxazepam (Serepax);
- some solvents and inhalants such as vapors from petrol, glue, chrome paint and lighter fluid.

Types of Drugs

2. **Stimulants** speed up or stimulate the central nervous system and can make the users feel more awake, alert or confident. Stimulants increase heart rate, body temperature and blood pressure. Other physical effects include reduced appetite, dilated pupils, talkativeness, agitation and sleep disturbance.

Types Include:

- Caffeine
- Nicotine in tobacco is a stimulant, despite smokers using it to relax
- Ephedrine, used in medicines for bronchitis, hay fever, asthma
- Amphetamines and methamphetamines, also known as 'speed', 'ice' and 'crystal meth'
- Cocaine, also known as 'coke' and 'snow';
- slimming tablets: e.g. Duromine and Tenuate;

Myth Busting

- Drug addiction is voluntary
- Drugs that are legal are helpful, illegal drugs are harmful
- Marijuana is not bad for you
- Combining drugs is not harmful
- Addicts can not recover
- Once detoxification ends, if the addict does not return to drugs, changes in the pathways of the brain will return to their normal state
- Driving is not affected by the influence of drugs

Cannabis

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHecR1u2tqk>

- Cannabis can cause health problems both physical and mental
- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is its main active ingredient
- Some use cannabis for medical purposes; e.g. multiple sclerosis or glaucoma
- Use at a young age is linked to increased mental health problems such as schizophrenia; psychiatric hospitalization may be necessary if heavily used
- Lowers motivation and lose interest in things
- Co-ordination and reactions slow down
- Effects asthma
- Can increase the heart rate and cause someone to have high blood pressure
- Might have hallucinations
- A small number of people that use cannabis go on to other drugs
- Use dates back to the Chinese in 2,700 b.c.
- Can be addictive; long term users become dependant

Effects of Excessive Caffeine

- Stimulates your heart, respiratory system, and central nervous system.
- Makes your blood more 'sludgy' by raising the level of fatty acids in the blood and raises blood pressure
- Causes your stomach to produce more acid, irritates the stomach lining
- Stimulates the cortex of your brain heightening the intensity of mental activity; temporary feeling of alertness. Those with high levels of anxiety heightened alertness can produce unpleasant effects.
- Affects the length/quality of sleep. Heavy caffeine users suffer from sleep-deprivation because their nervous system is too stimulated to allow them deep, restful or prolonged sleep.
- Caffeine addiction which involves nervousness, irritability, agitation, headaches or ringing in the ears.
- Causes blood sugar, or blood glucose, to be released from storage through the effects of the adrenal hormones. Requires your pancreas to over-work.