

# ILLEGAL DRUGS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

PARENT VERSION



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# INTRODUCTION

This resource has been developed to inform and educate parents about illegal drugs and to prevent and reduce harms caused by their use. The best way for young people to avoid harm is to prevent use, delay the onset of use, and to reduce the harm from their own and other people's use. For example, young people may be affected by an adult or a friend's drug use. It is important they know how to avoid harm from other people's use and, where appropriate, to assist themselves or others affected by drug use.

## WHAT ARE ILLEGAL DRUGS?

A drug is a substance that affects the way the body functions when it is used, and if it is illegal it means that it is forbidden by law. Different drugs have different effects on people. The effects of a drug are influenced by many factors, making them unpredictable and dangerous, especially for young people.

On pages 15–26 you will find a list of common illegal drugs and their effects.

BENZODIAZEPINES KETAMINE  
CANNABIS INHALANTS  
NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES PILLS AND ECSTASY  
HALLUCINOGENS COCAINE  
METHAMPHETAMINE  
GHB POLYDRUG USE  
HEROIN

# HOW MANY PEOPLE USE ILLEGAL DRUGS IN AUSTRALIA?

It may be shown differently by the media, but the truth is that most young people have never tried an illegal drug. This is important because if young people think that most of their friends use drugs they might be more inclined to try drugs as well.

## NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 12 TO 17 WHO USED ILLEGAL DRUGS IN THE PAST YEAR<sup>1</sup>

<b>CANNABIS</b>	<b>1 IN 7</b>	<b>12.7%</b>
<b>OPIATES (EG. HEROIN)</b>	<b>1 IN 100</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>ECSTASY</b>	<b>1 IN 50</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
<b>HALLUCINOGENS</b>	<b>1 IN 41</b>	<b>2.4%</b>
<b>METHAMPHETAMINE</b>	<b>1 IN 45</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
<b>COCAINE</b>	<b>1 IN 90</b>	<b>1.1%</b>

<sup>1</sup>Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (2012). Australian secondary school students' use of tobacco, alcohol, and over-the-counter and illicit substances in 2011. Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Victoria.



# WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE USE DRUGS?

If parents have an insight to the pressures young people face, they may better be able to understand some of the reasons behind why young people use drugs and help them to respond in a constructive way. Below are some of the reasons young people give for using drugs:

## **“Someone had some and I just thought I’d try it”**

- Ask if they knew what they were taking and discuss the effects of that particular drug;
- Ask whether it was what they expected, and talk about the risks of continued use;
- Try and find out if they felt pressured, and if so, discuss ways to handle similar situations in the future.

## **“I always wanted to try that stuff”**

- Ask what made that particular drug appealing, and what they expected to get from it;
- If they are happy to talk, you could discuss whether they have tried other drugs, and if so, why.

## **“All my friends were doing it so I thought why not?”**

- Ask if they felt safe because their friends were using it;
- Ask why they thought their friends used the drug;
- It’s useful to discuss the importance of being able to make their own choices, even if these choices are different from those of their friends.

## **“It made me feel really good”**

- Find out how they have been feeling in general, as this may be a good time to offer help and to find out if there is anything else going on, or if they want to talk about another issue;
- Talk about less risky and healthier ways of feeling good.

## **“All my problems from school, at home and in life just went away”**

- Let them know that you’d like to talk about any problems and discuss how to make things better;
- Discuss whether the problems returned after the effects of the drug wore off and highlight that using only makes the problems disappear for a while;
- Make it clear that you want to work together to find a better way of solving their problems.

## **“It gave me more confidence”**

- Let them know that they don’t need drugs to be more confident;
- Share similar experiences where you found it difficult in social situations and explain things you did to gain more confidence;
- Consider ways in which you can help improve their confidence and self-esteem.

## **“Well, you used drugs”**

- Be prepared for this type of response if this statement applies to you;
- Acknowledge the dangers of illegal drugs and that you would think differently now about the choices you’ve made.

## **“I don’t want to talk about it”**

- If they don’t want to discuss their use with you, offer to help them find someone else to talk to;
- Reassure them that what you want is what is best for them and understand if they would prefer to speak to someone else outside of the situation.



# ILLEGAL DRUGS AND THE LAW

It is against the law to possess, use, make, import or sell illegal drugs. Possession of drug-using equipment (e.g. a cannabis bong or pipe) is also against the law in most states and territories. Likewise, if illegal drugs are found in a person's locker, home, car etc. they will be charged, unless they can prove that the drugs do not belong to them.

The penalties for drug offences vary depending on the age of the offender (adult or minor), type of drug, quantities involved, previous offences, and the state or territory in which the offence happened.

## MINOR DRUG OFFENCE

Most states and territories will allow police to divert someone from going to court if charged for a minor drug offence such as possession of very small amounts of certain illegal drugs.

This can result in:



### A CAUTION

A formal warning recorded on a database for police records.

### A YOUTH JUSTICE CONFERENCE

A meeting where issues surrounding the offence are discussed with the parent/guardian, police, and health professionals.

### A DRUG ASSESSMENT AND EDUCATION SESSION

This involves being assessed for drug use and undergoing an education and counselling session.

**A CRIMINAL RECORD CAN LEAD TO DIFFICULTIES GETTING A JOB, CREDIT CARD OR EVEN A VISA FOR OVERSEAS TRAVEL.**

## MAJOR DRUG OFFENCE

If someone is caught with a larger quantity of illegal drugs or is a repeat offender, they may not be qualified for a diversion or caution and could face other penalties such as:



### A FINE

This can be up to \$100,000.

### A CRIMINAL PENALTY

This can include a heavy fine and/or imprisonment which may be up to 25 years.

## DRUG USE AND SCHOOLS

All schools take drug use very seriously. Although their first priority will be to look after the student and provide help, the person could also be suspended or expelled. The consequence will usually depend on the school policy and the nature of the specific drug incident.



# HOW PARENTS CAN PROTECT AGAINST DRUG USE AND RELATED HARMS

As a parent or guardian, you have a big impact on a teenager's life and the decisions they make. Research has shown there are many ways in which parents can minimise the chances that an adolescent will use illegal drugs, or experience harms from their use.

## BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL

Your behaviour and attitude towards alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs has a big influence on your child's behaviour, so it is important to set a good example in order to have a positive influence. Avoid contradictions between what you tell them and what you do, and try to demonstrate ways to have fun and deal with problems that don't involve drugs or alcohol.

## BE INVOLVED IN THEIR LIVES

Be sure to regularly spend time with your child where you can give them your undivided attention; you could set up a routine of having meals together or helping them with their homework. Get involved and show an interest in their hobbies and activities. Have internet access in a central area in the house. If they go out, ask them about where they are going and who they are going with and make this discussion a regular part of your conversation. Knowing who your child is with and where they are, can help reduce risk.

Peer influence can affect your child's behaviour, so it is natural to want to help your child choose the right friends and to get to know them. Invite them to your house, or talk to them if you pick your child up from school or after school activities. Get to know their parents as well, as they can provide a support network to look out for the safety of your children. If you have good reason to believe your child's friends are involved in drugs, be prepared to support your child to find a new set of friends by engaging them in some new activities.

## ESTABLISH & MAINTAIN GOOD COMMUNICATION

Let your child know that you are always ready and willing to talk and listen. Ask open-ended questions and encourage them to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions to show you value what they think. This will encourage them to be honest and not just say what they think you want to hear. When talking to them try not to lecture them, it is important to listen to their thoughts and concerns and offer help and support. Try and make yourself somehow available most of the time. For example, make sure your child can contact you easily if they are at a party.



# TALKING TO A YOUNG PERSON ABOUT ILLEGAL DRUGS

Illegal drugs are associated with many short and long-term harms. It isn't necessarily just how much someone is using, but how much their use affects their life and the lives of those around them.

There are some signs and behaviours that may raise concern to whether your child is using drugs, however many of these behavioural changes are also common among developing adolescents so it is important not to assume that these changes are due to drug use. Some signs of drug use may include: withdrawal from friends and family, a change in friends, a drop in grades at school, signs of depression, hostility, an increase in borrowing money, evidence of drug paraphernalia or missing prescription drugs.

If you have a son or daughter who you think is being affected by drug use, here are some tips to allow you to support them and to encourage them to communicate effectively with you about illegal drugs:

- **Gather information** to make sure you understand about the drug/s you think they may be taking. Reflect on their situation so you can organise your thoughts and have a clear idea of what it is that worries you about their drug use.
- **Arrange a suitable time to talk** where you will have some privacy and won't be interrupted.
- **Ask if they are using drugs; don't make assumptions** that they are using.
- Behavioural changes are a good starting point for discussion, for example "I noticed you haven't been yourself lately...".
- **Be prepared for a negative reaction.** One reason for this may be because they don't view their drug use as a problem. Be sure to stay calm and reasonable. Don't let it turn into an argument.
- **Don't be judgemental or tell them what to do.** When people are having a hard time, the last thing they need is a lecture. **Be sure to listen** and express your concerns in a supportive non-confrontational manner.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU CAN'T  
HANDLE THE SITUATION ALONE,  
YOU DON'T HAVE TO.  
GET SUPPORT FROM A FRIEND,  
RELATIVE OR HEALTH  
PROFESSIONAL.

IF NOTHING SEEMS TO BE WORKING, THEN SEEKING PROFESSIONAL HELP MAY BE THE NEXT STEP. YOU CAN CONSULT YOUR GP OR A COUNSELLOR.



- Don't focus on the reasons for why they are using drugs as this can be counterproductive.
- **Use statements including "I"** as this doesn't put the blame on them. Instead of saying "You make me feel worried when you use drugs" say something like "I feel worried about your drug use".
- **Let them know you care** about them and remind them of their good qualities. Young people will be more likely to listen and take advice on board if they feel valued and respected.
- **Be trustworthy and supportive** so they know that they can rely on you in a time of need, and that what they tell you is kept confidential.
- Let them know that **change is possible but it may take time**, so don't try to set deadlines for them as people will be less ready to change when they are being forced.
- If someone does not want to change, encourage them to learn how to reduce their risk of harm until they're ready to quit. **Let them know you are available to talk in the future.**
- At the back of this booklet you can find a list of places available to help people of all ages with any drug issues.





# HELPING A YOUNG PERSON WHO HAS TAKEN AN ILLEGAL DRUG

The majority of people never use drugs but it is important for people to know how to assist someone if a drug related emergency happens. Drugs are unpredictable; they can affect people in different ways and as there is no quality control for illegal drugs there is no way of knowing their content or strength.

**CALL 000 FOR AN AMBULANCE IMMEDIATELY IF THERE IS EVEN THE SLIGHTEST RISK THAT ANOTHER PERSON MAY BE HAVING AN UNUSUAL REACTION TO A DRUG.**

**A PARENT OR GUARDIAN WILL ONLY BE NOTIFIED IF THE PERSON IS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 AND TAKEN TO HOSPITAL. POLICE WILL ONLY BE NOTIFIED IF THERE IS A RISK TO THEIR OWN PERSONAL SAFETY OR IF SOMEONE DIES.**

## WHAT TO DO IN THESE SITUATIONS:

### PANIC ATTACKS

These can happen due to the increased feelings of paranoia, anxiety, and hallucinations that illegal drugs can bring on. These can be very frightening at the time, but it is important to know that these usually pass with time.

#### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNS

- Sweating and shaking
- Chest pains and difficulty breathing
- Increased heart rate
- Sense of impending death
- Dizziness, headaches, and lightheadedness
- 'Spaced-out' and non-responsiveness

#### WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE HAS A PANIC ATTACK

- Calm them down and reassure them that the feeling will pass
- Take them somewhere cool and quiet away from crowds and bright lights
- Encourage them to relax and take long, slow, deep breaths
- If they pass out due to over-breathing, follow the DRS-ABCD life support chart (see page 13)



# OVERHEATING AND DEHYDRATION

There is a serious risk of overheating and dehydration when people dance for hours and do not maintain their fluids. Stimulants such as ecstasy and methamphetamine will increase the body temperature, and this problem can be made worse if taken with alcohol as it will further dehydrate the body. Those who take stimulants should try to drink half a litre of water every hour, but make sure not to drink too much too quickly.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNS

- Feeling hot, unwell, lethargic, faint, or dizzy
- Inability to talk properly
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Inability to urinate or urine becoming thick and dark
- Not sweating even when dancing
- Fainting, collapsing, or convulsing

## WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE BECOMES OVERHEATED AND DEHYDRATED

- Take them somewhere cool and quiet such as the first aid area or chill-out room
- Get the person some cold water and get them to sip it slowly
- Make sure someone stays with them
- Give them salted foods like crisps or peanuts to replace salts lost through sweating
- Fan them to cool them down
- If symptoms persist or get worse seek first aid immediately, call '000', or take them to the nearest emergency department

# FEELING VERY DROWSY

If someone becomes very drowsy from using drugs they could fall asleep and lose consciousness. It is important to keep them awake while waiting for the ambulance.

## WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE BECOMES VERY DROWSY

- Call an ambulance, but make sure they are not left on their own
- Keep them awake; make them walk around or make them talk to you
- Don't give them coffee or try to shock them
- If they aren't responsive or lose consciousness put them in the recovery position (see page 14)



## **FITS OR SEIZURES (CONVULSIONS)**

Large amounts of alcohol and some drugs can cause convulsions, otherwise known as a fit or seizure.

### **WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE STARTS CONVULSING**

- Call an ambulance
- Clear the area of any nearby harmful objects
- Loosen any tight clothing
- Cushion their head
- It is important not to put anything in their mouth or to try and restrict their movement
- Once the fit has finished, check their breathing and put them in the recovery position (see page 14)

## **A PERSON COLLAPSES**

If a person collapses it may be necessary to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in order to temporarily maintain circulation to provide the brain with enough oxygen and glucose to keep functioning. An easy way to remember the steps involved in this process is to remember the acronym DRS-ABCD (see next page).





# DRS-ABCD: BASIC LIFE SUPPORT FLOW

<b>D</b>	<b>check for DANGER</b> -First ensure that your safety is not at risk. -If your safety is assured and the person is in danger move them out of the dangerous situation.
<b>R</b>	<b>check for RESPONSE</b> - Ask them their name or to open their eyes.
<b>S</b>	<b>SEND for help</b> - If you receive no response call for an ambulance on '000'. - If you are on your own with the person, first place them in the recovery position (see next page) and then call '000'. - If you know what drugs the person has taken tell the operator and ambulance officers.
<b>A</b>	<b>open the AIRWAYS</b> -If the airway is not clear, place them in the recovery position and open and clear the airway. -If the airway is clear, leave on back, then tilt the head backwards and lift the chin.
<b>B</b>	<b>check for BREATHING</b> Look and feel for chest movements. Listen for breathing from airways.  -If they are breathing, place them in the recovery position and monitor until ambulance arrives. -If the person is not breathing, place the person on their back, pinch their nose closed, seal your lips over their mouth and give two initial breaths, ensuring that the chest rises with each breath.
<b>C</b>	<b>CPR</b> If they are still not breathing, commence <b>CPR</b> until the ambulance services arrive.  -Place one hand on top of the other, palms facing down, over the centre of the chest. -Compress the chest one third of the depth, 30 times, at a rate of two per second. -Give 2 breaths for every 30 chest compressions (mouth to mouth can be considered unnecessary). -Continue CPR until: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Signs of life return;</li><li>• Qualified help arrives; or</li><li>• It is impossible to continue (e.g. exhaustion)</li></ul>
<b>D</b>	Attach an automated external <b>DEFIBRILLATOR</b> if available and follow the prompts.



# PUTTING SOMEONE IN THE RECOVERY POSITION

1

Kneel beside the person



2

Straighten their arms and legs



3

Fold the arm closest to you over their chest



4

Place the other arm at a right angle to their body



5

Get the leg closest to you and bend the knee



6

While supporting the person's head and neck, gently take the bent knee closest to you and very gently roll the person away from you. Adjust the upper leg, so both the hip and knee are bent at right angles. Ensure the person is steady and cannot roll



7

Tilt the head back and make sure the airways are clear and open





# CANNABIS

“ THE LAST TIME I HAD A JOINT WAS ONE OF THE WORST NIGHTS OF MY LIFE. I FELT LIKE I WASN'T AWARE OF TIME AND THAT I WAS LOSING MY MIND. MY HEART WAS RACING AND I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO HAVE A HEART ATTACK. IT'S DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN BUT IT WAS A TRULY TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE THAT HAS MADE ME NEVER WANT TO TOUCH WEED AGAIN. ”

—Thomas, 15

## WHAT IS IT?

Cannabis is derived from the plant *Cannabis sativa*. The main active ingredient responsible for the 'high' produced by cannabis is called delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).

Cannabis is produced in three main forms:

- **Cannabis herb (also known as marijuana)** - the dried flowering tops/buds and leaves of the cannabis plant
- **Cannabis resin (also known as hashish)** - the resin (a secreted gum) of the cannabis plant
- **Cannabis oil (also known as hash oil)** - a thick oil obtained from hashish

While hashish and hash oil contain more THC than marijuana, they are not widely used in Australia. Cannabis is typically smoked and often mixed with tobacco. It is also sometimes added to food and eaten. **Cannabis is also known as grass, pot, dope, weed, joints, mull, hydro, yarndi, ganja, bud, or green.**

For more information see [www.ncpic.org.au](http://www.ncpic.org.au)

## EFFECTS OF CANNABIS

If smoked, the effects can come on quickly as THC is rapidly absorbed into the lungs and can enter the bloodstream within minutes.

The effects of cannabis vary, but may include:

IMMEDIATE	LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss of inhibitions</li><li>• Drowsiness</li><li>• Increased appetite</li><li>• Loss of co-ordination</li><li>• Bloodshot eyes</li><li>• Dryness of the mouth and throat</li><li>• Lethargy</li><li>• 'Greening out' (sweaty, dizzy, nauseous, vomiting)</li><li>• Anxiety and panic attacks</li><li>• Paranoia and psychosis</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Problems with memory and learning</li><li>• Dependence (addiction)</li><li>• Decreased motivation and concentration</li><li>• Increased risk of respiratory diseases</li><li>• Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious)</li><li>• Psychosis (see glossary).</li></ul>



# PILLS AND ECSTASY



## WHAT ARE THEY?

Ecstasy is the common name for the drug methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA).

'Pills' is a word used to describe a range of substances sold in pill-form. Traditionally, 'pills' referred to tablets containing MDMA. Pills or tablets sold as ecstasy may not contain any MDMA at all, and/or they may contain a wide range of other substances. Some substances found in pills can be highly toxic even at low doses. It is important to note that even pure ecstasy is risky.

Ecstasy is usually sold in pill form, although it can also be sold as powder, crystals, or in capsules. Pills usually have a logo stamped on them. However, a logo is no guarantee of quality or purity: two pills that look the same may have very different effects as they can come from different sources and have different ingredients.

Ecstasy and pills are also known as **E, pills, pingers, doopa, love drug, disco biscuits, XTC and eccy.**

**ANALYSIS IN 2011/2012 BY THE AUSTRALIAN CRIME COMMISSION INDICATES THE AVERAGE PURITY OF PILLS SOLD AS ECSTASY RANGED FROM 15-18% ACROSS AUSTRALIA.**

## EFFECTS OF ECSTASY

Ecstasy causes activity in the central nervous system to speed up, and can take effect within 60 minutes of initially taking it. However, the time taken to have an effect can vary. Sometimes people mistakenly think the first pill they took isn't working and take more – this can be very dangerous.

Effects of ecstasy vary, but may include:

IMMEDIATE		LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dilated (enlarged) pupils</li><li>• Increased heart rate and blood pressure</li><li>• Increased energy</li><li>• Feeling of euphoria (a 'high')</li><li>• Teeth grinding and jaw clenching</li><li>• Anxiety and panic attacks</li><li>• Overheating and dehydration (when the body loses more water than it takes in)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A 'comedown' (see glossary)</li><li>• Nausea, vomiting and dizziness</li><li>• Visual distortions (things looking weird or different)</li><li>• Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious and frightened)</li><li>• Psychosis (see glossary)</li><li>• Serotonin syndrome (see glossary)</li><li>• Stroke</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dependence (addiction)</li><li>• Long-term problems with depression</li><li>• Impairments to memory and attention</li><li>• Liver problems</li></ul>



# METHAMPHETAMINE



## WHAT IS IT?

Methamphetamine comes in three main forms:

Form	Usual appearance	Also known as	Potency	Mainly used by
<b>Ice/ Crystal meth</b>	Translucent crystals, sometimes shards	Shabu, Tina, glass, meth, crystal	Medium to high; Normally the most potent form	Smoking, injecting
<b>Base</b>	White to brown thick oily substance	Pure, point, wax, meth	Medium to high	Swallowing, injecting
<b>Speed</b>	White or off-white powder	Goey, meth	Low to medium	Snorting, swallowing, injecting

All forms of methamphetamine can be 'cut' (mixed) with other substances, which reduce the purity. Sometimes these other substances can also be harmful. Ice or crystal usually gives a stronger high and lasts longer, but also has stronger negative side effects.

## EFFECTS OF METHAMPHETAMINE

Methamphetamine takes effect quickly. The effects can last between 4 and 12 hours, although it can take 1 to 2 days for the drug to completely leave the body.

Effects of methamphetamine vary, but may include:

IMMEDIATE		LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased heart rate and blood pressure</li> <li>• Dilated (enlarged) pupils</li> <li>• Increased energy</li> <li>• Feeling of euphoria (a 'high')</li> <li>• Aggressive behaviour</li> <li>• Trembling</li> <li>• Bad headaches and dizziness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 'comedown' (see glossary)</li> <li>• Insomnia</li> <li>• Stomach cramps</li> <li>• Reduced appetite</li> <li>• Blurred vision</li> <li>• Anxiety and panic attacks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence (addiction)</li> <li>• Dental problems</li> <li>• Heart, kidney and lung problems</li> <li>• Malnutrition and exhaustion</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• If injected there is an increased risk of infections like Hepatitis C and HIV</li> <li>• Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious and frightened)</li> <li>• Psychosis (see glossary)</li> <li>• Stroke</li> </ul>



# COCAINE

“ IT STARTED OFF ONLY OCCASIONALLY, BUT SOON I WAS TAKING COCAINE IN THE MORNING JUST TO GET THROUGH THE DAY. MY FRIENDS STOPPED TALKING TO ME, MY GIRLFRIEND LEFT ME AND I HAD TO STEAL FROM MY OWN FAMILY JUST TO PAY FOR DRUGS. ”

–Francis, 17



## WHAT IS IT?

Cocaine is produced from the leaves of the *Erthroxylon coca plant*, and comes in three main forms:

- A paste which is often off-white or light brown
- A powder which is often white or off-white
- A white or off-white crystal rock known as crack cocaine

In Australia, cocaine is most commonly in a powder form which is often used by snorting. As with all powder drugs, it is often sold ‘cut’ (mixed) with other white powder substances which can sometimes be harmful in their own right.

Cocaine is also known as coke, blow, charlie, C, dust, flake, nose candy, snow, white, crack, rock, and freebase.

## EFFECTS OF COCAINE

When snorted or injected, cocaine quickly produces an intense ‘rush’. This feeling or ‘high’ doesn’t last very long – usually around 30–45 minutes if snorted.

Effects of cocaine vary, but may include:

IMMEDIATE		LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dilated (enlarged) pupils</li><li>• Irregular heart beat</li><li>• Reduced appetite</li><li>• Increased energy and confidence</li><li>• Feeling of euphoria (a ‘high’)</li><li>• Nausea and vomiting</li><li>• Anxiety and panic attacks</li><li>• A ‘comedown’ or crash (see glossary)</li><li>• Aggressive behaviour</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Headaches and dizziness</li><li>• Twitches and tremors</li><li>• Insomnia</li><li>• Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious and frightened)</li><li>• Hallucinations (e.g. seeing or hearing things that aren’t really there)</li><li>• Delusions (strong beliefs that do not reflect reality)</li><li>• Psychosis (see glossary)</li><li>• Overdose</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dependence (addiction)</li><li>• Nasal and sinus problems including damage to the nasal septum</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Heart damage</li><li>• Lung problems</li><li>• Kidney failure</li><li>• Increased risk of strokes and seizures</li></ul>





# INHALANTS

“ MY SON WAS SNIFFING AEROSOLS, NOT ALL THE TIME BUT NOW AND THEN. HE WAS AT MY SISTER’S HOUSE AND HE INHALED AN AIR FRESHENER. HE PASSED OUT AND WENT INTO CARDIAC ARREST WHICH KILLED HIM INSTANTLY.

—Natalie, 41 ”

## WHAT ARE THEY?

Inhalants, also known as volatile substances or solvents, are substances that are sniffed or breathed in through the nose and/or the mouth to give the user an immediate high.

There are four main types of inhalants:

Type	Examples
<b>Volatile solvents</b>	Paint thinners, glues, petrol, correction fluid
<b>Aerosol sprays</b>	Deodorants, hairsprays, spray paints
<b>Gases</b>	Nitrous oxide (laughing gas), propane, fire extinguishers
<b>Nitrites</b>	Room deodorisers, leather cleaner

## EFFECTS OF INHALANTS

Most inhalants have an immediate effect and usually only give a high for a few minutes. Users sometimes keep on sniffing to prolong the high — in some cases this can lead to loss of consciousness, brain damage, and even death.

Effects of inhalants vary, but may include:

IMMEDIATE	LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased heart rate</li> <li>• Feeling light headed and dizzy</li> <li>• Loss of inhibitions</li> <li>• Agitation</li> <li>• Loss of coordination and balance</li> <li>• Irritation to the eyes, nose and throat</li> <li>• Aggressive behaviour</li> <li>• Slurred speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Confusion and drowsiness</li> <li>• Nausea and vomiting</li> <li>• Hallucinations (e.g. seeing or hearing things that aren’t really there)</li> <li>• Suffocation</li> <li>• Seizures</li> <li>• ‘Sudden sniffing death’ syndrome</li> </ul> <p><i>Inhaling these substances can cause heart failure within a few minutes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence (addiction)</li> <li>• Brain damage</li> <li>• Tremors</li> <li>• Problems breathing</li> <li>• Loss of hearing and vision</li> <li>• Increased risk of leukaemia from petrol sniffing</li> <li>• Damage to the immune system, bones, nerves, kidney, liver, heart, and lungs</li> </ul>



# HEROIN

**HEROIN IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE SECOND MOST ADDICTIVE DRUG AFTER TOBACCO**



## WHAT IS IT?

Heroin is one of a group of drugs known as opiates, so-called because they are natural products of the opium poppy – these also include opium, morphine, and codeine.

In Australia, heroin can be a fine powder, granules or rocks, and is normally white or off-white in colour although it is sometimes brown. It is normally injected, but is also snorted, smoked, or heated and the vapours inhaled (chasing the dragon). It can be sold 'cut' (mixed) with a range of substances that can also be harmful. This makes it hard for the user to know the purity of what's being taken.

**Heroin is also known as hammer, gear, or smack.**

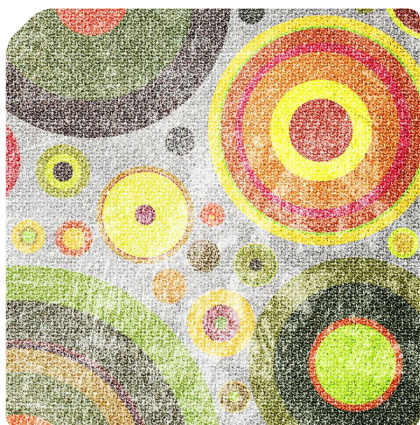
## EFFECTS OF HEROIN

Heroin produces a 'rush' within seconds of injecting or smoking it, or up to about 5 minutes if it's snorted. The effects of heroin can last for approximately 3–5 hours.

Effects of heroin vary, but may include:

IMMEDIATE	LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Small ('pinned') pupils</li><li>• Drowsiness and sedation (a state of calm or sleep)</li><li>• Pain relief</li><li>• Feeling of euphoria (a 'high')</li><li>• Feelings of detachment</li><li>• Nausea and vomiting</li><li>• Overdose</li><li>• Coma</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dependence (addiction)</li><li>• Dental problems</li><li>• Constipation</li><li>• If injected there is an increased risk of infections like Hepatitis C and HIV</li><li>• Infertility</li><li>• Social problems, such as falling-out with friends</li><li>• Financial issues such as debt and poverty</li></ul>





# HALLUCINOGENS

“**ME AND A FEW MATES DECIDED TO TAKE A FEW TABS OF ACID. FIFTY MINUTES LATER I COLLAPSED AND THOUGHT I SAW SHADOWS COMING TOWARDS ME. I WAS SCREAMING AND CRYING FOR HELP BUT MY FRIENDS WERE ALSO HIGH AND UNABLE TO HELP.**”

—Alice, 16

## WHAT ARE THEY?

Hallucinogens (also known as psychedelics) are a category of drugs that cause perceptual distortions such as hallucinations. Hallucinations are experiences where people hear or see things that aren't really there, or where perception is altered. For example, colours or shapes may appear to be changing, more brightly coloured or moving. Users may also experience unusual thoughts, feelings, or beliefs.

Hallucinogens can be naturally occurring or synthetic. **The most commonly known synthetic hallucinogen is LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide), also known as acid, trips or tabs. Naturally occurring hallucinogens include magic mushrooms, DMT (Dimethyltryptamine), mescaline (found in peyote), or salvia.**

## EFFECTS OF HALLUCINOGENS

The effects of hallucinogens are extremely variable and unpredictable, even if the person has used the same substance before. Factors that influence the drugs' effects include the person using (e.g. mood, personality), the setting, and the particular drug itself.

Effects of hallucinogens vary, but may include:

IMMEDIATE		LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased heart rate and body temperature</li><li>• Dilated (enlarged) pupils</li><li>• A trance-like state</li><li>• Feeling of euphoria (a 'high')</li><li>• Restlessness</li><li>• Nausea and vomiting</li><li>• Hallucinations (e.g. seeing or hearing things that aren't really there)</li><li>• Stomach cramps</li><li>• Disorientation (increasing the risk of injury)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tiredness, dizziness and amnesia</li><li>• Anxiety, panic attacks, fear or terror (a 'bad trip')</li><li>• Loss of consciousness</li><li>• Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious) and psychosis, lasting up to several hours after the drug effects have worn off</li><li>• Poisoning, particularly with magic mushrooms if the wrong type is used. This can be fatal.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flashbacks (spontaneous recurrences of a specific experience). Sometimes these can last for days, weeks or sometimes even years after taking the drug</li><li>• Dependence (addiction)</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Anxiety and panic attacks</li><li>• Memory problems</li><li>• Personality changes</li><li>• Psychosis (see glossary)</li></ul>



# KETAMINE

**KETAMINE IS COMMONLY USED BY VETERINARIANS TO SEDATE ANIMALS SUCH AS HORSES.**



## WHAT IS IT?

Ketamine (ketamine hydrochloride) is a white powder, usually sold in 'bumps' or grams. A 'bump' is a small amount of powder, usually snorted through a small glass nasal inhaler called a bumper. Ketamine can also be swallowed, smoked, or injected.

As with all drugs sold in powder form, ketamine may also be sold 'cut' (mixed) with other white powder substances which may or may not be harmful – users can never be 100% sure of what they're getting.

**Ketamine is also known as K, Special K, Vitamin K, or horse tranquilizer.**

## EFFECTS OF KETAMINE

If snorted or 'bumped', ketamine takes effect within 5–10 minutes (longer if swallowed). Its effects can last for a couple of hours.

Effects of ketamine vary, but may include:

### IMMEDIATE

- Increased heart rate and body temperature
- Drowsiness
- Feeling of euphoria (a 'high')
- Loss of coordination
- Slurred speech
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Confusion and disorientation
- Numbness and a feeling of paralysis.
- Nausea and vomiting
- Anxiety and panic attacks

- Hallucinations (e.g. seeing or hearing things that aren't really there)
- Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious and frightened)
- Psychosis (see glossary)
- An experience known as the 'K-hole' which is the feeling of being trapped in a state of detachment. This can be frightening.
- Overdose

### LONG TERM

- Dependence (addiction)
- Problems with memory, attention, and decision making
- Mental health problems
- Ulcerative cystitis – symptoms include cramps and frequent, painful and involuntary urination.
- Intense abdominal pains known as 'K-cramps'
- Kidney problems



# GHB



THERE'S A VERY HIGH RISK OF OVERDOSING WITH GHB. THERE'S VERY LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE AMOUNT THAT CAUSES THE 'HIGH' AND THE AMOUNT THAT CAUSES AN OVERDOSE

## WHAT IS IT?

GHB is short for gamma-hydroxybutyrate and it is naturally produced in small amounts by the body. It is almost always sold as a clear or blue odourless liquid, usually in a little vial such as fish-shaped sushi soy sauce container and it's normally swallowed. Problems with safety, including concerns about its use as a date rape drug, have led to it being classified as an illegal drug.

Sometimes other substances called GBL and 1,4B are sold as GHB because they have similar effects but may be stronger (increasing the risk of overdose) or more toxic.

**GHB is also known as fantasy, grievous bodily harm, GBH, liquid ecstasy, liquid E, G, or Gina.**

It is also sometimes referred to as liquid ecstasy or liquid E but it is not related to ecstasy at all.

## EFFECTS OF GHB

Once swallowed, GHB takes around 15–30 minutes to take effect and the effects last for about half an hour.

Effects of GHB vary, but may include:

IMMEDIATE	LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased heart rate and chest pains</li><li>• Drowsiness, passing out, blackouts or memory loss</li><li>• Blurred vision</li><li>• Feeling relaxed</li><li>• Feeling of euphoria (a 'high')</li><li>• Lethargy</li><li>• Hot/cold flushes</li><li>• Heavy sweating</li><li>• Confusion and agitation</li><li>• Nausea and vomiting</li><li>• Headaches and dizziness</li><li>• Tremors or shaking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Little is known about the long term effects of GHB</i></li></ul>



# BENZODIAZEPINES



**OBTAINING  
BENZODIAZEPINES WITHOUT  
A PRESCRIPTION FROM A  
DOCTOR IS ILLEGAL.**

## WHAT ARE THEY?

Benzodiazepines are medications that may be prescribed for a range of problems, including anxiety and insomnia. They are usually prescribed in a tablet or capsule form and the most common is diazepam (Valium). Others include alprazolam (Xanax), and oxazepam (Serepax). If used as prescribed, benzodiazepines can be effective medications. However, there are risks, particularly if they're not used properly, or are used regularly (e.g. daily) for more than a few weeks.

**Benzodiazepines are also known as benzos, downers, sleeping tablets, or sleeping pills.**

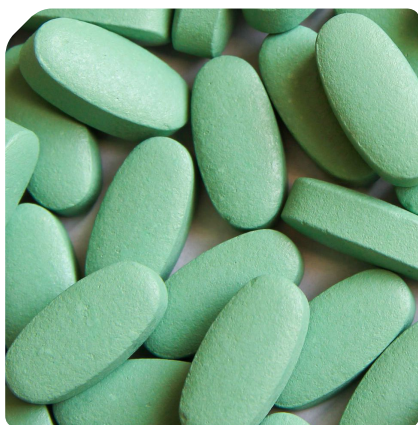
## EFFECTS OF BENZODIAZEPINES

Once swallowed, benzodiazepines usually take about half an hour to start taking effect. The length of time the effects last for varies.

Effects of benzodiazepines vary, but may include:

IMMEDIATE	LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decreased heart rate</li><li>• Drowsiness and sedation</li><li>• Shallow breathing</li><li>• A feeling of calmness</li><li>• Confusion</li><li>• Loss of balance and coordination</li><li>• Dizziness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Slurred speech</li><li>• Blurred vision</li><li>• Blackouts</li><li>• Overdose</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dependence (addiction)</li><li>• In dependent users, suddenly stopping use can cause fatal seizures. People wishing to stop should seek advice from their GP</li></ul>





# NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

## WHAT ARE THEY?

These drugs are usually marketed as ‘legal highs’, ‘synthetic drugs’, ‘party pills’, ‘research chemicals’, or ‘plant food’ and are often used as substitutes for other illegal drugs. These new psychoactive substances are typically sold as powders, tablets, or as smoking mixtures. Most of these are illegal, or are quickly made illegal, because of health risks. They are continually changing, but current new psychoactive substances include:

Examples	Category	Attempting to copy the effects of
Mephedrone (meow meow)	Synthetic cathinone	Ecstasy, methamphetamine, cocaine
BZP, TFMPP	Synthetic piperazines	Ecstasy, methamphetamine
2C-I, 2C-B, DOI	Substituted phenethylamines	Ecstasy, methamphetamines, cocaine, hallucinogens
Methoxetamine, MXE	Dissociative anaesthetics	Ketamine
DMT	Substituted tryptamines	Hallucinogens

One pill (or package) may contain a mixture of different substances. New psychoactive substances are sold under a wide variety of other names, including ‘Infinity’, ‘Benzo Fury’ and ‘Diablo’. The list is endless and names change frequently. However, users can’t be sure what they’re getting as the packaging doesn’t guarantee what’s inside.

## EFFECTS OF NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

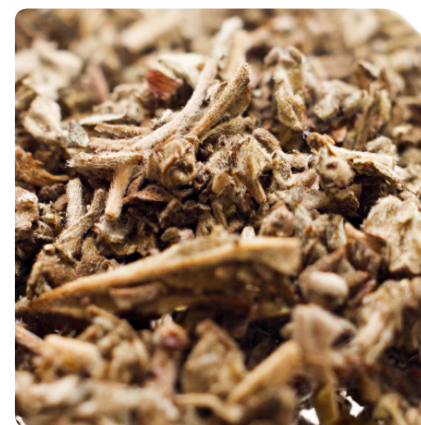
Taking these is like a roll of the dice – they haven’t been around long enough to know what the immediate risks are or what might happen later on in life to people who use them. However, it is known that a small number of people have died from using some types of new psychoactive substances.

Effects of new psychoactive substances vary, but may include:

IMMEDIATE		LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased heart rate and body temperature</li> <li>• Dilated (enlarged) pupils</li> <li>• Feeling of euphoria (a ‘high’)</li> <li>• Twitches and tremors</li> <li>• Aggressive behaviour</li> <li>• Anxiety and panic attacks</li> <li>• Nausea and vomiting</li> <li>• Dizziness and headaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• A ‘comedown’ (see glossary)</li> <li>• Insomnia</li> <li>• Hallucinations (e.g. seeing or hearing things that aren’t really there)</li> <li>• Overdose</li> <li>• Serotonin syndrome</li> <li>• Paranoia and psychosis</li> <li>• Seizures</li> </ul>	<p><i>Early information suggests that use of some new psychoactive substances may lead to a range of problems including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence (addiction)</li> <li>• Memory problems</li> <li>• Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious and frightened)</li> <li>• Psychosis (see glossary)</li> </ul>



# SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS



## WHAT ARE THEY?

Synthetic cannabinoids are drugs that are often sold as a 'legal' alternative to **cannabis**, while claiming to have similar effects. They are often sold as 'herbal smoking blends' with different brand names, such as 'K2', 'Spice', and 'Kronic'. Despite the fact that these blends are often sold in stores or online and marketed as 'legal' and 'safe', many contain ingredients that are actually illegal and potentially very dangerous.

Usually these products are plant material that have been sprayed with one or more active chemicals that, when smoked, mimic some of the effects of cannabis. As the active ingredients used are often synthetic and produced in laboratories, they are neither 'herbal' nor 'natural', but rather they are engineered to be stronger than traditional cannabis, and therefore may pose a greater risk.

Also, blends often contain a mixture of different active ingredients, despite being sold under the same brand name. In addition to this, ingredients can change as different substances are made illegal, although the brand or product name may stay the same. This means that buying the same brand twice does not guarantee that the contents will be the same, and therefore the effects may also be different. It is therefore very difficult to know what is actually in the product.

## EFFECTS OF SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS

Like other new psychoactive substances, taking these is like a roll of the dice, and the immediate and long-term effects are still unknown.

Effects of synthetic cannabinoids can vary depending on the ingredients of the product, but may include:

IMMEDIATE	LONG TERM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drowsiness</li><li>• Dilated (enlarged) pupils</li><li>• Paranoia</li><li>• Agitation</li><li>• Irritability</li><li>• Memory changes</li><li>• Confusion</li><li>• Sedation or loss of consciousness</li><li>• Panic attacks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very rapid heartbeat, as well as irregularity of heartbeat</li><li>• Slowing down of heart rate</li><li>• Chest pain</li><li>• Extreme anxiety</li><li>• Nausea</li><li>• Vomiting</li><li>• Appetite changes</li><li>• Seizures and convulsions</li></ul> <p><i>Early information suggests that use of some synthetic cannabinoids may lead to a range of problems including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dependence (addiction)</li><li>• Withdrawal symptoms when usage is ceased</li><li>• Memory problems</li><li>• Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious and frightened)</li><li>• Psychosis (see glossary)</li></ul>





# POLYDRUG USE

## WHAT IS IT?

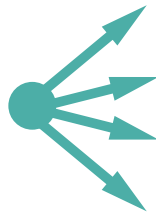
Mixing drugs or taking one drug when under the influence of another drug is known as polydrug use. Combining drugs in this way carries extra risks and can be extremely dangerous. The more drugs a person takes (or is affected by) at a time, the more chance there is of something going wrong.

An example of polydrug use would be smoking cannabis while under the influence of alcohol. Mixing alcohol with drinks that contain caffeine is another example.

The effect of mixing drugs depends on which drugs are mixed together. Combining drugs that have the same physical effects (e.g. two or more stimulants or two or more depressants) is especially dangerous. This is because it increases the impact on normal functioning of the brain and body.

### COMBINING STIMULANTS

e.g. cocaine and ecstasy



**SEROTONIN SYNDROME**

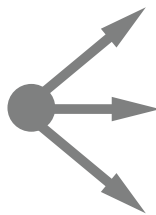
**PSYCHOSIS**

**ANXIETY OR PANIC ATTACKS**

**HEART PROBLEMS**

### COMBINING STIMULANTS AND DEPRESSANTS

e.g. speed and alcohol



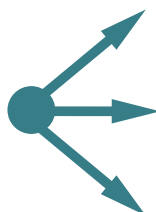
**HEART PROBLEMS**

**RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS AND BRONCHITIS**

**DEHYDRATION, OVERHEATING, AND KIDNEY FAILURE**

### COMBINING DEPRESSANTS

e.g. benzodiazepines and alcohol



**ACCIDENTS OR INJURY THROUGH BEING 'OUT OF IT'**

**FATAL OVERDOSE AS A COMBINATION OF DEPRESSANTS WORK TOGETHER TO SLOW DOWN BOTH THE HEART AND BREATHING RATE**

**NONFATAL OVERDOSE, WHICH CAN RESULT IN PERMANENT BRAIN DAMAGE**



# GLOSSARY

## COMEDOWN

Just like getting a hangover from drinking alcohol, taking illegal drugs can lead to experiencing negative after-effects sometimes known as a 'comedown' or 'crash' which are the feelings experienced as the drug wears off. The type of effects experienced during this period depend on the type of drug(s) used. They might include feelings of depression, insomnia, extreme tiredness, irritability, and anxiety just to name a few and this can last anywhere from a few hours to a day or so after initially taking the drug. This is different to withdrawal effects (a sign that a person is addicted).

## DEPENDENCE [ADDICTION]

People can also become physically and/or psychologically dependent on (addicted to) drugs, especially if they use regularly. They can develop tolerance, meaning that they need to take more of the drug to get the same effect.

The lifestyle of many people who are drug dependent (addicted to a drug) is difficult and often stressful and can lead to:

- Loss of jobs and problems finding work
- Losing touch with friends, family, and loved ones
- An inability to pay rent and bills, which can result in homelessness
- Impaired physical health
- Increased mental health problems
- Involvement in crime

## DEPRESSANT DRUGS

Reduce activity in the central nervous system. Examples include:

**Alcohol, GHB, Ketamine, Benzodiazepines, Opioids (e.g. Heroin).**

## PSYCHOSIS

People affected by psychosis may experience hallucinations (e.g. seeing or hearing things that aren't really there) delusions (strong beliefs that do not reflect reality), and paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious and frightened). If symptoms last for more than a few days, this could indicate that the person may have a more serious mental illness such as schizophrenia.



## SEROTONIN SYNDROME

A life threatening condition that usually starts within 24 hours of taking the drug. It occurs when the brain is overloaded with a neurotransmitter (brain chemical) called serotonin. Symptoms include coma, seizures, shaking, confusion, rigid muscles, rapid heartbeat, and overheating.

## STIMULANT DRUGS

Increase the activity in the central nervous system. Examples include:

**Cocaine, Caffeine, MDMA (ecstasy), Methamphetamine (speed, ice, crystal, crystal meth, base), Ritalin, some new psychoactive drugs such as mephedrone and BZP.**

## WITHDRAWAL EFFECTS

People who are drug dependent may also experience withdrawal effects when they stop using. Withdrawal effects can last for several days to many weeks, depending on the type of drug and severity of their dependence. Withdrawal symptoms may include feelings of anxiety, depression, restlessness, irritability, and aggression. On top of this, withdrawal can also cause muscle spasms, headaches, muscle cramps, diarrhoea, vomiting, and cravings for the drug.





# MORE INFORMATION AND SOURCES OF HELP

It takes a lot for someone to admit they may have a problem with drugs, but it's the first step to overcoming it. Your son or daughter may find it easier to talk to an external source for help or for information on drugs. There are a number of places available to help young people and parents with drug related issues or for those wanting general information:

## KIDS HELP LINE

Kids Help Line telephone, web and email counselling is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to children and young people of Australia aged between 5–25 years of age.

**[www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)**

**Phone: 1800 55 1800**

## REACH OUT

This website has information on the actual drugs, where to seek help, how to help a friend, and many other youth related issues.

**[au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)**

## HEADSPACE

Headspace provides information and counselling services with anything to do with alcohol, drugs, education, employment and general or mental health. It's for 12–25 year olds and has centres all around Australia.

**[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)**

## LIFELINE

A 24-hour phone and online counselling service designed to help anyone through all problems.

**[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)**

**Phone: 13 11 14**

## SANE

Sane has a helpline and website that provides information and support for mental health issues.

**[www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)**

**Phone: 1800 18 7263**

## NATIONAL DRUGS CAMPAIGN

Australian Government website provides information about illicit drugs and campaign resources.

**[www.australia.gov.au/drugs](http://www.australia.gov.au/drugs)**



## COUNSELLING ONLINE

Counselling online allows you to communicate with a professional counsellor about an alcohol or drug related concern using text interaction. This service is free for anyone seeking help with their own drug use or the drug use of a family member, relative, or friend. Counselling Online is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week across Australia.

[www.counsellingonline.org.au](http://www.counsellingonline.org.au)

## AUSTRALIAN DRUG INFORMATION NETWORK

This website provides a directory of places in all states and territories in Australia, where it is possible to seek information and services to assist with alcohol and other drug related issues.

[www.adin.com.au](http://www.adin.com.au)

## NATIONAL CANNABIS PREVENTION AND INFORMATION CENTRE

Provides evidence-based cannabis resources and factsheets, as well as a cannabis information helpline.

[www.ncpic.org.au](http://www.ncpic.org.au)

Phone: 1800 30 40 50

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Australian Government  
Department of Health



NHMRC CENTRE OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE  
in MENTAL HEALTH and SUBSTANCE USE

**NDRI**  
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