



## **Drugs**

### **The facts about illicit drugs speak for themselves**

#### **Teenage drug use**

29 per cent of teenagers aged between 14 and 19 had used an illicit drug of some type, including cannabis, in their lifetime.

#### **Obtaining drugs**

About 7 out of 10 illicit drug users obtained their drug from friends or acquaintances.

#### **Drugs and property crime**

In several jurisdictions where surveys were recently done, 83 per cent of adult males detained on property offences tested positive to a drug of some type (excluding tobacco and alcohol).

#### **Mental health**

People aged 18 years and over who used illicit drugs in the past month were twice as likely to report high or very high levels of psychological distress as those who had not.

#### **The cost to our community**

The estimated social cost of illicit drug abuse to the community is very high.

#### **What families can do about illicit drugs?**

The most effective deterrent to drug use amongst young people is a parent who is devoted to spending time with them.

Someone who talks with them about their friends, what goes on at school, the sport they play, what interests them.

The more parents and other family members get involved in children's lives, the more positive young people will feel about themselves and the more likely they will be to respond favorably to their family's views.

Making sure you know where your children are and who they are with doesn't mean you don't trust them, it means that you care enough to be involved.

Always remember that contact with illicit drugs involves the risk of criminal penalties and possibly a criminal record. This means that it is worth spending some time to check a few facts so that you can talk confidently about drugs with young people.

They will be more likely to accept your advice if you don't exaggerate or make false claims.

Remember that you don't need to be an expert about drugs to help a young person choose not to use them.

### **Will your children listen to you?**

When it comes to talking about drugs, extensive about drugs, extensive research conducted with parents and their children tells us that young people will appreciate your advice and look to you for your views.

But they will expect you to be informed, up front and honest. And if you show you are listening to them, they are more likely to listen to you.

Regardless of your knowledge and experience of drugs, you have a valuable role to play in talking with your children about drugs. When a young person is considering whether or not to take drugs, an important issue for them is "What will my parents think?" This means that it is very important to make your position absolutely clear that you don't want them to use illicit drugs. Ever.

Again, by being involved in your children's lives, their friendships, school and sporting activities, they will be more likely to look to you for advice, and their self-esteem will be enhanced so they can more confidently resist any pressure to take drugs.

In talking to your children about drugs, be honest, frank and don't assume for a moment that they already know where you stand. They expect you to talk about drugs so be very plain about what you think. You owe it to them not to leave any room for

misunderstanding. It is also important to talk often about the dangers of drug use and that your rules apply at home, at school and everywhere else.

**This section outlines examples of various drugs, their street names (which change over time and have differing uses, symptoms of use and some of the potential consequences of using them.**

People can become dependent on these drugs (addicted). This can include having trouble controlling their use of drugs and still using even when they realise it is causing them problems. It can also include the development of tolerance-where a person needs to use more of the drug to get the same effect. People can also become physically dependent on some of these drugs. This means that they will experience physical symptoms (withdrawal) then they try to stop using them. Please note that this booklet, including information about specific drugs and their health effects, is a general guide only. Other effects can include breakdown in relationships and job loss. The focus of this booklet is illicit drugs and the nonmedical use of some pharmaceutical products. This booklet should not be used as a substitute for advice from suitably qualified medical or health professionals.

## **Know drugs**

### **- Information about drugs**

#### **Cannabis**

**Product:** Marijuana, hashish, hashish oil, Cannabis Sativa, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol.

**Street Name:** Pot, grass, weed, reefer, joint, Mary -June, Acapulco Gold, rope, mull, cone, spliff, dope skunk, bhang, ganja, hash, chronic.

**Symptoms:** Slow thinking, slow reflexes, reduced coordination and concentration, reduced motivation, apathy, dilated pupils, blood shot or glassy eyes, increased appetite, dryness of the mouth, increased pulse rate.

**Potential consequences:** Mood swings, memory impairment, weight gain, increased risk of cancer of the lung, mouth, throat and tongue, panic attacks, delusions, hallucinations, paranoid thinking and other mental health problems. Cannabis serves as a barrier against self-awareness, and may interfere with a young person's development including possible interference with reproductive function.

## **Ecstasy**

**Product:** MDMA(Methylenedioxymethamphetamine), ecstasy.

**Street Name:** Ecstasy, E,EX, E and C, eccy, MDMA, PMA, Adam, XTC, love durg eggs.

**Symptoms:** Increased blood pressure and pulse rate, raised body temperature, sweating, overheating jaw clenching, teeth grinding, nausea, anxiety, excitability, tremors, insomnia, dilated pupils, loss of appetite.

**Potential consequences:** Weight loss, chronic sleep problems, cracked teeth through grinding, high blood pressure, dehydration, anxiety, nervousness, hallucinations, decreased emotional control, lethargy, severe depression, nerve cell damage, thermal meltdown, death from heart failure.

## **Amphetamines**

**Product:** Methamphetamine, amphetamine sulphate, dexamphetamine, Ritalin, Tenuate

**Street Name:** Speed uppers, ice, meth, crystal, whizz, snow, go-ee, shabu, point, paste, base, zip, eve, leopard's blood, oxblood, gogo, MDEA.

**Symptoms:** Increased blood pressure and pulse rate, increased breathing, teeth grinding, excitability, anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, fever and sweating, flushing, dry mouth and lips, dilated pupils, nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, mood swings.

**Potential consequences:** Weight loss, paranoia, hallucinations, chronic sleep problems, cracked teeth through grinding, high blood pressure, panic attacks, anxiety, nervousness, decreased emotional control, severe depression, violent behavior, speed psychosis, nerve cell damage, death from heart failure or suicide, High risk of addiction, especially if injected.

## **Cocaine and crack cocaine**

**Product:** Cocaine, crack cocaine

**Street Name:** Cocaine-coke, flake, snow, happy dust, Charlie, gold dust, Cecil, C, freebase, toot, white girl, Scotty, white lady. Crack cocaine - crack, rock, base sugar block.

**Symptoms:** Excitability, euphoria, talkativeness, anxiety, increased pulse rate, dilated pupils, paranoia, agitation, hallucinations.

**Potential consequences:** High risk of addiction, violent or erratic behaviour, hallucinations, cocaine psychosis, eating or sleeping disorders, impaired sexual performance, ongoing respiratory problems, ulceration of the mucous membrane of the nose, collapse of the nasal septum, cardiac arrest, convulsions.

## Hallucinogens

**Product:** LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), Psilocybin, MDA (methylenedioxyamphetamine), PCP(phencyclidine).

**Street name:** LSD - acid, trips, wedges, windowpane, blotter, microdot. Psilocybinmushies, blue meanies, magic mushrooms, gold tops, datura, angel's trumpet. PCP- angel dust, hog, loveboat.

**Symptoms:** Trance-like state, excitation, euphoria, increased pulse rate, excitation, euphoria, increased pulse rate, insomnia, hallucinations, paranoia.

**Potential consequences:** Impaired judgement and coordination can result in greater risk of injury, self-inflicted injury, violent behaviour, paranoia, depression, anxiety, unpredictable flashbacks.

## Inhalants

**Product:** Can include a number of general household and office products-solvents, aerosols, glue, petrol.

**Street name:** Nitrous oxide-laughing gas, whippits, nitrous. Amyl nitrate-snappers, poppers, pearlers, rushamines, Butyl nitratelocker room, bolt bullet, rusk, climax, red gold.

**Symptoms:** Slurred speech, impaired coordination, nausea, vomiting slowed breathing.

**Potential consequences:** Brain damage, pains in the chest, muscles joints, heart trouble, severe depression, fatigue, loss of appetite, bronchial spasm, sores on nose or mouth, nosebleeds, diarrhoea, bizarre or reckless behaviour, sudden death, suffocation.

## **Depressants**

**Product :** Sleeping pills, minor tranquillisers.

**Street name:** Benzos, temazzies, Valium, tranks, slepers, Serapax, serries, Mandrax, mandies, Rohypnol, rohies.

**Symptoms:** Drowsiness, confusion, incoordination, slurred speech depressed pulse rate, shallow breathing.

**Potential consequences:** Anxiety, depression, restlessness, tremors, insomnia, changes in eyesight, high risk of addiction, suicide.

## **Opioids**

**Product:** Heroin, morphine, codeine, methadone, buprenorphine, pethidine, Dilaudid, Kapanol, MS Contin.

**Street name:** Heroin - horse, hammer, H, dope, smack, junk, gear, boy. Morphine - M, Miss Emma, mister blue, morph. Methadone - done

**Symptoms:** Lethargy, drowsiness, euphoria, nausea, constipation, constricted pupils, slowed breathing.

**Potential consequences:** High risk of addiction, mood swings, depression, anxiety disorders, chronic constipation, infection at site of injection, HIV and hepatitis infections through sharing of needles, non-fatal overdose, death from overdose.

## **GHB:**

**Product:** Gamma - hydroxybutyrate (GHB).

**Street name:** Fantasy, grievous bodily harm (GBH), liquid ecstasy, liquid E, G

**Symptoms:** Drowsiness, induced sleep, nausea, reduced inhibitions, dizziness, headache, increased sociability, initial euphoria leading to confusion and agitation

**Potential consequences:** Extreme drowsiness / grogginess, hallucinations, difficulty in focussing eyes, vomiting, impaired movement and speech, reduces muscle tone, disorientation, convulsions / seizures, coma, respiratory distress, slowed heart rate, lowered blood pressure, amnesia, death. Can be addictive with prolonged use.

## **What other facts should you know?**

There are some basic facts about illicit drugs that everyone should know

- All drugs carry risks and are dangerous.
- No one can ever be sure of exactly what they are taking.
- Mixing drugs, including alcohol and prescription drugs, can be very dangerous.
- There are no guarantees about purity or strength and no one knows exactly what illicit drugs have been mixed with.
- No one can be sure what effect a drug will have, even if they have used it before.
- Cannabis remains the most commonly used illicit drug. Among 14 to 19 year olds, 26 per cent had used cannabis in their lifetime.

## **How do drugs affect different people?**

It is possible for different people to have different reactions to the same drug just as one person may have a different reaction each time they use it. A person's reaction to a drug will vary according to factors such as :

- The type of drug.
- The amount and strength of the drug. How the drug is taken.
- A person's body size.
- Whether a person has used the drug before.
- The person's mood and the setting at which the drug is taken such as at a party with friends or on their own.
- Other drugs taken. The consequences of mixing drugs can be very severe.

## **What about drugs and mental health?**

There is some ongoing debate about the link between drug use and mental illness. There is agreement however, that people with drug problems seem to have an increased risk of mental health problems, and similarly, people experiencing mental health problems have a higher rate of drug use.

The most commonly reported mental illnesses linked to drug use are anxiety and depression and there are also some reports of psychotic illnesses (such as schizophrenia). Use of some drugs appears to contribute to, or trigger, mental health problems in some young people. Alternatively, a young person might already have emotional or mental health problems that could lead them to try and relieve these problems by 'self medicating' through using drugs.

## **Why do young people try drugs?**

Some parents think that young people use drugs only if they are having problems at home or at school. But there are many other reasons :

- Availability and acceptability of the drug.
- Curiosity and experimentation.
- Wanting to be accepted.
- Rebellion.
- Depression.
- As a way to relax or cope with stress, boredom or pain.
- To experience a high or a rush.
- To feel OK, at least temporarily (self medication).

## **When do young people try drugs?**

There are no hard and fast rules about when young people start trying different types of drugs. However, cannabis use tends to start from the early to mid teenage years while experimentation with drugs such as ecstasy and amphetamines (speed) generally begins in the mid to late teens. Remember that many young people will never use drugs, but some will try them while they are still very young. Some will try drugs, but not continue to use them.

Families play an important role minimising alcohol and other drug related harms by maintaining supportive communications with their children and by creating a safe and secure environment for them.

## **The reasons teenagers give for trying drugs and what you can say**

Here are some of the reasons young people give for using drugs and some ideas about how you might choose to respond to them.

### **"Someone had some and I just thought I'd try it."**

Express your concern and question their decision. Ask whether it was what they expected and talk about the risks of further use. Try and find out if they felt pressured - this may lead to better ways for them to handle a similar situation in the future. Consider using examples of times when you have had to deal with a similar situation.



**"I always wanted to try that stuff."**

Ask what made that particular drug appealing, and what they expected to get from it. Questions such as "What did you think it would be like?" and "Why that drug?" may be worthwhile. You may be able to discuss whether they have tried other drugs and if so, why. Say that you're concerned with their behaviour and try to establish some ground rules.

**"All my friends were doing it so I thought ...why not?"**

Make your feelings about drug use clear and explain why you don't want them to use drugs. Ask if they felt it was safe because their friends were using it. Ask why they thought their friends used it and whether they were aware of the risks. Discuss the dangers of experimenting with drugs. It may be useful to discuss the importance of being able to make their own responsible decisions instead of following the crowd.

**"It made me feel really good."**

Try exploring the main reason the young person took the drug. Find out how they have been feeling. This is a good time to offer help and to find out if there is anything you can do for them or if they want to talk about another issue. Talk about less risky ways of feeling good.

**"All my problems from school, home and life just went away."**

This statement is a chance to really confront other issues. You can express your concern about your teenager using drugs as a means of coping. Let them know that if there are problems, you would like to talk about them. Ask what can be done to make things better. Discuss whether the problems returned after the effects of the drug wore off.

Express your feelings about the dangers of using drugs to deal with problems. 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 this is of concern to you and explain that they don't need drugs to feel good about themselves. Share your own experiences where you also found it difficult in social situations and explain ways that helped you gain more confidence. These can be both positive and negative experiences. By acknowledging your own behavior, you will increase your credibility with the young person. Consider ways in which you can help to improve the young person's confidence and self-esteem.

### **"Well, you used drugs."**

You should be prepared for this type of response if this statement applies to you. You need to be frank and open with your child. Acknowledge that illicit drugs are dangerous and that you would think differently now. You are an important role model.

## **10 ways to encourage young people to talk with you about drugs**

### **1. Be part of their lives**

Make sure that you make time for your children. Take an interest in their interests and establish a routine for doing things together. Don't be afraid to ask where your teenagers are going and who they will be with. Spending time together as a family is important. For example, try to talk and eat together every day and find other opportunities to enjoy time together as a family.

### **2. Listen to them**

Showing a willingness to listen will help your children to feel more comfortable about listening to you. Ask for their input about family decisions to demonstrate that you value their opinions. Try not to interrupt or react in a way that will stop further discussion. Encourage them to feel comfortable about telling you their problems.

### **3. Be a role model**

When it comes to drugs, there is no such thing as "Do as I say, not as I do" If you take illicit drugs, you can't expect your child to take your advice. Don't underestimate the influence your behavior can have on your children, particularly any use of tobacco or misuse of alcohol and medications.

### **4. Be honest**

It is important to be informed but don't pretend to know everything. Be prepared to say "I don't know but I will try and find out" Be honest and clear about where you stand so that your children will find it easier to be honest with you.

### **5. Pick your moment**

Choose the right time to discuss the topic by looking for natural opportunities as they arise. This might be watching TV, when talking about someone at school or in response to something that was similarly difficult to talk about.

### **6. Be calm**

Being calm and rational is also important and don't overreact. You should keep the lines of communication open and don't ridicule or lecture. Remember that getting angry will just close the door on further discussion.

### **7. Avoid conflict**

It is difficult to solve a problem when there is conflict. Try to see their point of view and encourage them to understand yours. If a confrontation develops, stop the conversation and return to it as soon as both of you are calmer.

### **8. Keep on talking**

Once you've had a discussion. it's important to have another. Ensure that you are always willing to speak to your children about drugs and start early.

### **9. Set clear boundaries**

Most young people expect and appreciate some ground rules. Allowing them to take part in setting the rules encourages them to take more responsibility for sticking to them. Once you have rules, enforce them and ensure young people know of the consequences of breaking them.

Find and agree to ways young people can act should they find themselves in a situation that exposes them to drugs. For example, let them know that you will always collect them if they need you to, even if it is late at night.

However, make it absolutely clear that you would rather they didn't put themselves in a situation where they are likely to be exposed to illicit drugs.

### **10. Focus on the positive**

Reward your children's good behavior and emphasize those things they do well. Encourage them to feel good about themselves and let them know that they deserve respect.

### **How will you know if your teenager is trying drugs?**

If you are worried that your teenager is trying drugs, asking them may be a good way to begin.

If your children have told you they aren't using drugs, but you are still concerned they may be doing so, there are warning signs that may indicate that a young person is experimenting with drugs. The following is intended only as a guide, as many of these signs may be as a result of other changes related to development through the teenage years. Please consider how often these warning signs occur, if a number occur at the same time and the extent to which a young person's behaviour or actions have changed.

- A drop in school grades.
- A reduction in organized extra-curricular activities (such as an unexplained dropping-out of sport or other activities or interests.)
- Blood shot or glassy eyes.
- Lethargy and loss of motivation.
- An unexplained change of friends.
- Unusual or irregular behavior.
- Mood swings.
- Minimal interaction with the family.
- Valuable items or money missing.
- Changes in eating patterns.

### **What to do if you think your teenager is trying drugs?**

It is important that you discuss with your teenager. Let them know that you are concerned about their well-being and that they might be using drugs. You may not be able to discuss this easily, but don't give up. Be open with them so that they are encouraged to be open with you. Otherwise, you won't get the full story of what is going on in their life. Discuss with them that they consider to be the benefits and consequences of using drugs. This may provide an opportunity to give them new information about the risks of drug use.

**Where do you go for help?**

Don't be afraid to ask for help. A range of services and support is available to help both the person using drugs as well as their family and friends. Remember that you don't need to handle a drug problem on your own. There are many places in your community - doctor, schools and other organizations - that can provide support.

"We who are parents have a particular obligation to confront this social problem and to make our sons and daughters aware of the risks and possible consequences of drug use."