



**KNOWLEDGE
IS POWER!**
FACTS AND
SAFETY
ADVICE ABOUT
SUBSTANCES



Emergency services are busy right now, so take a few minutes to think about your safety.

With the extra pressure on the emergency services caused by COVID-19, it's more important than ever to think about your safety and know the facts when it comes to substances like alcohol and drugs.

Fewer young people than ever choose to use substances like alcohol and illegal drugs. And that's for the best, because in reality there is no totally safe way to use these substances.

We know that some young people will choose to use them though. It's important to know that if you do choose to use a substance, or are around other people that are doing so, there are things you can do to reduce the risks and keep yourself safe.

So here's a few simple things to remember about the most commonly used substances in this area:

Alcohol (drink, booze)

- **Plan ahead.** Try to have an idea in your head of how many drinks you are planning to have before you start—it makes it easier to keep track.
- **Look out for your friends, and remember that people can lose control of their behaviour when drunk.** If someone you know is acting strangely or seems ill, it's best to try and get them to a quiet, calm place.
- **It's hard to tell the difference between someone sleeping and someone who's passed out.** Look out for very slow breathing—if someone is breathing less than 8 times a minute, it's time to call for help.
- **When a drunk person is going to sleep, encourage them to lay on their side.** After drinking, people can be sick in their sleep, and if they are laying with their heads back they can choke.



Cannabis (weed, pot, hash)

- **Avoid using cannabis too often.** It can easily become a daily habit, which costs a lot of money. And however much you want some, never leave yourself owing someone money for cannabis. It makes you really vulnerable and can influence you in to making some bad decisions..
- **Don't mix it with other substances.** Mixing cannabis with other things can make you really sick and can lead to you losing track of what's going on around you.

MDMA (ecstasy, E, pills, Mandy, Molly)

- **Don't take too much.** The biggest danger when using MDMA is accidentally using too much—overdoses can lead to brain damage and even death. One thing to watch out for is that a lot of pills are actually meant to be split up, and contain more than one dose. Start with no more than a quarter of a pill, and wait at least 2 hours for the effects to kick in before thinking about having any more. If it's powder, start with a dab the size of the tip of your little finger.
- It's quite common for similar chemicals to be sold as or mixed with MDMA, and it's not really possible to tell what's in a powder or pill by looking at it, smelling it, or even tasting it. That's why the 2 hour wait is really important, as some of these chemicals can be stronger than normal MDMA but take longer to kick in.
- **Don't have any more than 1 pint of liquid an hour.** If you're doing something energetic like dancing or other physical exercise when using MDMA, you will get thirsty. MDMA can make it difficult to go to the toilet, and the body can only cope with having so much liquid in it before it becomes a really serious medical emergency. So always sip your drinks, never gulp, and have no more than 1 pint of liquid an hour.

Benzodiazapenes (Benzos, Bennys, eggs, vallies)

- **Don't take too much.** Just like MDMA, the strength of benzos and what's in them can vary a lot. It's safest to take a quarter pill as a test dose with any new batch. Even if they look like prescription tablets, as these are often fake.
- **Don't mix with alcohol.** Benzos REALLY don't go well with alcohol. They affect the same part of the body and brain, and mixing them can easily lead to an OD.

Cocaine (coke, sniff)

- **Test it first.** Like any other powder it's impossible to tell what's in it until you've taken it. Go slow and start with a tiny bit to test it.
- **Sharing is not caring.** Don't share notes or straws to sniff it out of. You can pass on anything from a cold to HIV that way.



Nitrous Oxide (Nos, nangs, whip-its)

- **Remember to breathe.** It might sound silly but Nos will make you feel out of it for a while, and holding onto balloons too long or restricting breathing can and has led to really bad things happening to people.
- **Chargers must be emptied into a balloon or similar before using.** The pressures in them can vary, so attempting to take them straight into the mouth can cause lung and throat injuries.

Pregabalin/Gabapentin (pregs, gabs)

- **Test a small bit first.** Lots of fake pills are out there. Never trust that the dose printed on the drug or a container is correct, and always test a tiny piece of a pill before having more.
- **Don't mix with other substances.** This is another substance that doesn't mix well with others.

Ketamine (Ket, K)

- **Don't take too much.** Ketamine is an anaesthetic that's used to put people and animals to sleep for surgery. Too much can make you feel VERY out of it, and could make you pass out. This can make you really vulnerable, so be careful with the dose.
- **Test a small bit first.** Ketamine is usually sold as a powder, and just like the other powders in this leaflet, it can be mixed with other things that you don't expect. If you're taking some, start by testing a tiny amount.
- **Take regular breaks to prevent significant damage.** If you've used Ketamine before, you will know that it makes you need to use the toilet a lot. This can actually be really serious. Over time, Ketamine use damages the bladder so badly that heavy use can make it stop working completely. Take regular breaks and try not to overdo it—or you could end up needing an operation.

Reducing risks when using substances

If you decide you're going to try a substance for the first time, do some research. A few minutes reading or watching a video could prevent a disaster.

Mixing different substances is always much more dangerous than using one at a time. It makes it much easier to overdose or to become so out of it that you can't look after yourself properly.

Legal substances can be dangerous too. In fact, alcohol is involved in more deaths and serious incidents than all the illegal drugs combined. Don't underestimate it!

Think about the place you intend to use a substance and the people you are with. Be somewhere you feel safe and around friends that you trust.

If something goes wrong, please don't feel afraid to get help. Even if you are under the influence of something yourself, emergency services will thank you for raising the alarm if someone is in trouble. If a friend gets hurt and you do nothing, not only will that stay with you forever, you are much more likely to face consequences yourself.



If you need further help:

We Are With You—Our local service offer support, advice and treatment for anyone wanting to get help with their substance use. We Are With You have a dedicated young people's team.

Telephone: 01472 806890

Text: 07835 927120 (9:30am - 4:30pm, Monday – Friday)

Web: www.wearewithyou.org.uk

The information in this leaflet is compiled from several sources. If you'd like to know more on this topic, check out the below:

www.talktofrank.co.uk

www.drugwise.org.uk

www.globaldrugsurvey.com

#young&safe

