FRANK

DRUGS. DOES YOUR CHILD KNOW MORE THAN YOU?

Drugs information leaflet for parents and carers

“Of course I worry about my son taking drugs. But what can I do? You can’t watch over them 24 hours a day.”

“Talking to kids about drugs only encourages them to experiment. The later they find out about them the better.”

“My daughter wouldn’t take drugs. Our family doesn’t have the problems that would make her turn to them.”

“I found this block of brown stuff in her room. How do I know if it’s cannabis.”

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IN THE KNOW, OR IN THE DARK?

Watch TV or read a paper and you might see and hear things about drugs. But where your child is concerned, what can you do – especially if you don't know cocaine from cannabis?

What do we mean by drugs?

- illegal substances such as heroin, cocaine, cannabis and mephedrone
- misused household products –like gases, glues and aerosols or other volatile substances
- some medicinal drugs (which can be misused)
- alcohol and tobacco
- New Psychoactive Substances often referred to as so called 'legal highs'

In this leaflet, when we talk about drugs we are generally refering to **illegal drugs**, **volatile substances** (including gases, glues and aerosols) and so called '**legal highs**'

FRANK ADVICE

The truth is that you probably can't prevent your child from coming into some contact with drugs. But your influence can mean they make the right choice if they do – by making sure you know as much as you can about drugs and talking openly about the risks. Do you feel you don't know enough to talk to your child? It's never too late to get clued up. This leaflet will give you the facts about drugs. And FRANK can give you more information and advice if you need it.

Being in the know right now could make all the difference to the choices your child faces in the future.

DRUGS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

why do young people take drugs?

The truth is; **most young people DON'T...**

In fact, over 60% of 16–24 year olds have never taken an illegal drug and most of those who do try drugs don't continue using them. Only a small minority of young people will end up with a drug problem. In fact, research shows that a child is far more likely to develop a problem with alcohol than with drugs.

FRANK FACT

All drug use can have an effect on health, relationships and personal safety.
However, for a minority of people, drug use takes over and disrupts their life and becomes a problem. They can become addicted and some end up getting involved in crime or exposed to risky lifestyles and influences.

Some young people do take drugs and they will do for different reasons:

Rebellion and the need to fit in

Young people can feel under pressure to do what their friends are doing. Some feel more grown up or part of a group if they take drugs.

Recreational drug use

Some enjoy the pleasant short-term effects. They like to relax, 'get high' or lose their inhibitions.

Experimental drug use

Some are just curious about the effects of different drugs. All drug use can have an effect on health, relationships and personal safety. However, for a minority of people, drug use takes over and disrupts their life and becomes a problem. They can become addicted and some end up getting involved in crime as a result of it, or exposed to risky lifestyles and influences.

> "One of my mates took an E at a party without knowing what it would do to her. She was OK that night, but she wasn't expecting the comedown afterwards. **Tina, 20**"

what drugs do they take?

Although many people believe otherwise, levels of drug use among young people aged 11-15 have gone down in recent years – to be exact, the amount of 11-15 year olds who had taken an illegal drug in the last year has fallen from **20%** in 2001 to **12%** in 2012.

FRANK FACT

The number of young people under 15 who take Class A drugs like cocaine and heroin is extremely small.

"All my mates were smoking dope, and I was curious. I did it for a while, but then I stopped. I just got bored of it."
Jamie, 17

FRANK can also put you in touch with **local services** if you need them.

FRANK ADVICE

Whilst the risks are very real, if you want to talk to your child about drugs, there's no point being heavy-handed as this will probably backfire.

You need to take a balanced approach and bear in mind that, when it comes to drugs, information is everything.

Giving your child the facts from reliable and credible sources, and telling them in a reasonable manner about the effects and risks of substance misuse, will make them feel empowered and informed rather than chastised.

Be sure to talk about specific drugs, rather than lump them all together. Make the necessary distinctions between, say, cannabis and heroin, and discuss the relative levels of harm.

If they see that you have a realistic view of the risks, they'll be more likely to listen to you.

WHAT'S THE HARM?

"My mum thinks all drugs are addictive and keeps saying I'll end up a junkie. I know people who've taken acid and been fine. She doesn't know what she's talking about. **Mark, 15**"

FRANK FACT

It's hard to tell what the effects of a drug will be. It will vary depending on who's taking them, their state of mind, what the drug is mixed with and where it is being taken.

Other risks

Health

- all drugs can affect a young person's health in different ways
- some effects are from long-term use, such as liver, kidney and heart problems
- there are also immediate risks, >>>

>>> such as overdose. Perfectly fit young people have died from a heart attack after taking drugs – especially volatile substances (like gases, glues and aerosols)
- if there's a history of mental health problems in the family, taking drugs can be particularly risky and may lead to having a mental health illness

Financial

- drugs aren't necessarily expensive. Household products such as glue and aerosols can be used as drugs, for example. The price of an E can be less than a pint of lager
- however, frequent or daily drug use can get people in debt

Social

- for some people, drugs are a way of bonding with friends and people they meet
- drug use can start to take over their life and damage their relationships
- there is also the risk that friendships based around drug use will make it more difficult for some people to stop taking drugs

Personal safety

- if your child is 'off their head' or having a bad experience on drugs, they are more vulnerable to assault
- when they take drugs, young people are also more likely to make decisions they'll regret – such as having unprotected sex. Taking drugs also increases the risk of being involved in an accident

Every drug has its highs and lows. But there are risks involved in taking all drugs. Which of these statements do you think are **facts** and which are **fiction**?

	Fact	Fiction
A If you're going to buy drugs, it's best to buy from someone you know so that you know what you're taking.		
B If you stick to drugs you've taken before, you're safe because you know how you react to them.		
C It's hard to know the strength or purity of a drug – this can lead to accidental overdose.		
D It can be dangerous to mix different drugs – this includes taking a drug and drinking alcohol.		
E Drugs are a slippery slope. Start on the softer drugs and you'll soon be taking the harder stuff.		
F If you give drugs to friends, you can be charged with supplying.		
G People with a drug conviction can have problems getting visas to travel to some foreign countries.		
H Volatile substances (including gases, glues and aerosols) can kill the first time they're used.		

Answers on page 51

TALKING DRUGS

Most young people would trust their parents out of a range of authority figures – including the Police and teachers. Your opinions do matter to them, even if it doesn't seem like it sometimes!

If you don't talk, someone else might

You may not be sure when it's time to talk to your child about drugs, but it might be earlier than you think. Even young children might start asking questions about things they've heard at school or seen on TV.

"I spoke to all my kids about drugs early on, and I'm glad I did. One of them told me as soon as a friend of hers started taking drugs, and we were able to talk about it."

FRANK ADVICE

Don't leave them to pick up information from their friends or TV. It's likely that your child trusts you – even if they don't show it. You're the right person to talk to them about drugs. Give them accurate information; make sure they know your views so they know where they stand with you.

Younger children are less likely to question authority and more willing to share their thoughts with you. But, as they get older, children want more independence and are often less likely to discuss their views with their parents. Keep communication channels open by taking an interest in their day and what they're learning at school. Make it clear that their safety and wellbeing are important to you.

> "The most important thing I've ever done is to tell my kids that it's ok to say no to drugs if their friends are taking them. Help them feel confident and let them know that they can talk to you if they want to."

Top tips for talking

Find out the facts about drugs
before you start the conversation.

Think about how you will react
if they say they have used drugs.

Don't make assumptions about
what they know or do.

If they say they've used drugs,
stay calm and don't panic.

If they say they don't but you think they're lying,
don't accuse them.

Pick a good time to talk.
Don't do it before they rush off to school. Or, if they are using drugs, don't confront them when they're high.

Use opportunities to talk.
Stories in the media about drugs, or drug-related storylines on TV can be useful springboards for a conversation. Using these opportunities may mean your child doesn't feel accused of anything and therefore they may be more likely to respond to the conversation.

Listen with respect
to what they have to say. And don't lose your temper if you disagree with your child's opinions. It might make them rebel more.

Let them know you're there for them –
that they can talk to you about drugs.

Set boundaries.
Make it clear what your house rules are so they know what you will and won't accept.

Call on your friends.
If you or your child are too embarrassed to talk, why not ask someone close to speak to them.

"I thought mum would go nuts when I told her I'd taken drugs. She wasn't happy but we had a chat and she didn't go crazy. She said she'd be there for me.' **Jasmine, 15**"

FRANK ADVICE

If a child is high on drugs, don't scare them or shout at them as this can be dangerous.

You or your child can turn to FRANK in confidence if you have any questions about drugs or need advice.

SAFETY FIRST

Help your child stay safe

You can't be with your child **24 hours a day.**

So what can you do to reduce the risks if they do try drugs?

Signs of possible drug use

- moody
- not bothered about personal hygiene
- not interested in anything
- staying out late
- falling out with old friends and in with a new crowd

Are they just being a teenager?
Or are they using drugs?

There often aren't any clear signs, but things to look out for include:

- loss of appetite, drowsiness, poor hygiene or appearance
- mood swings
- red-rimmed eyes and/or a runny nose
- uncharacteristic loss of interest in school, hobbies and friends
- money going missing regularly for no apparent reason
- unusual equipment found around the house, such as burnt foil, torn cigarette packets

Helping your child stay safe

Remember that emergencies are very rare. But sometimes people can have a bad reaction to drugs.

They could have a bad experience and get anxious and panicky. Or become overheated and dehydrated.

It's best to be prepared, just in case, so that you know what to do if your child falls ill after taking something.

First things first

- try not to panic
- calm them and be reassuring
- try to find out what they've taken
- explain that the feelings they're having will pass
- stay with them
- if you are worried at all or your child becomes unconscious, **call 999** and ask for an ambulance

If your child is anxious and panicky

This can happen with: cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, magic mushrooms, speed

What to do:

- sit them in a quiet room
- keep them away from crowds, bright lights and loud noises
- if they are breathing very quickly, tell them to take long, slow breaths

If your child is really drowsy

This can happen with: tranquillisers, volatile substances (which include gases, glues and aerosols) and heroin

What to do:

- sit them in a quiet place and try to keep them awake
- don't frighten them or let them exert themselves – it can be dangerous. A sudden fright can kill someone who is high on volatile substances
- never give them coffee to wake them up
- if symptoms continue, place them in the recovery position
- if they don't start to become more alert, call an ambulance straight away

If your child is too hot and dehydrated

This can happen with: ecstasy and speed

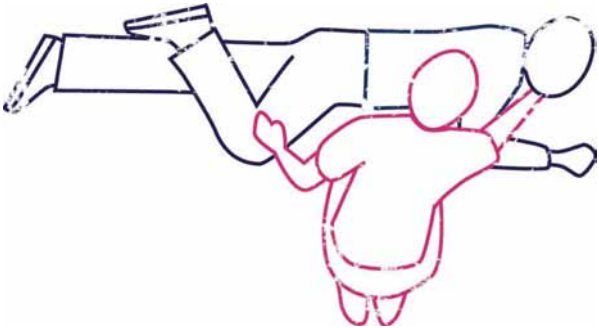
What to do:

- move them to a quiet, cooler place
- take off excess clothing to help them cool down
- give them non-alcoholic drinks like fruit juice, sports drinks or water to sip (no more than a pint an hour)

FRANK ADVICE

If your child is unconscious

- **dial 999** straight away
- place them on their side in the recovery position
- stay with them until the ambulance comes
- if you know what they have taken tell the ambulance crew or, if you've found drugs, hand them over so that they may be able to tell what they're dealing with.



THE LAW

The Classes of illegal drugs

Drugs are divided into **Class A, B or C**, broadly according to the harm they can do. Class A drugs are the most harmful and likely to be more addictive. The penalties for being caught with drugs are different, depending on the Class and the circumstances.

Possession

If police catch someone with drugs, they always take action, even if it's only a small amount. What happens depends on the circumstances but could include a formal caution, arrest and prosecution. With under 18s, the police will contact their parent or guardian.

Supply

Supplying (or intending or offering to supply) illegal drugs is treated more seriously than possession. This is often called 'dealing' and includes giving drugs to mates, even if it's for free. Looking after drugs for someone and then giving them back can also lead to a charge of supplying drugs.

The courts will use the latest sentencing guidelines for those who commit drug offences.

'Legal highs'

The term 'legal highs' is misleading because they may contain one or more substances that are actually illegal to possess. Some substances in legal highs could be subject to a temporary ban. This means they are 'temporary class drugs' and could be illegal for at least 12 months. The possession of a temporary class drug is not illegal but the supply of it is an offence. If the police suspects that the 'legal high' contains a temporary class drug, they can confiscate the substance and dispose of it.

A drug dealer could end up in jail for a long time.

See table on next page

Maximum penalties table

Drug	Maximum penalties
Class A – cocaine and crack cocaine, crystal meth, ecstasy, heroin, LSD and magic mushrooms	**Possession** – 7 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine **Possession with intent to supply or supply** – Life in prison and/or an unlimited fine
Class B – cannabis, mephedrone, synthetic cannabinoids, methoxetamine and amphetamines	**Possession** – 5 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine **Possession with intent to supply and supply** – 14 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine
Class C – anabolic steroids, GBL, GHB, ketamine and tranquillisers	**Possession** – 2 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine **Possession with intent to supply and supply** – 14 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine
Temporary Class Drugs	**Possession** – No possession offence but the police can confiscate and dispose of a suspected temporary class drugs **Possession with intent to supply and supply** – 14 years in prison and /or an unlimited fine.

ABC OF DRUGS

The following pages give you information on some of the more commonly used drugs:

- what they look like
- their effects; and
- possible risks.

FRANK ADVICE

You can talk to FRANK for more detailed information on specific drugs

CLASS A DRUGS

cocaine

coke, charlie, snow, C

Can cause physical and psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- white powder
- snorted or sometimes dissolved and injected

Feels like:

- sense of wellbeing, alertness, confidence
- effects last roughly 30 minutes
- people are often left craving more

Possible side-effects and risks:

- tiredness and depression for one or two days after use – sometimes longer
- chest pain and potentially fatal heart problems
- convulsions or fits if they regularly take a lot
- injecting can damage veins
- sharing injecting equipment carries a risk of catching dangerous infections like hepatitis B or C and HIV/AIDS
- an expensive habit that's hard to control

crack cocaine

crack, rock, wash, stone

Can cause physical and psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- small raisin-sized white/off-white crystals (a form of cocaine)
- smoked
- injected

Feels like:

- the same effects as cocaine, but a more intense and shorter 'high'

Possible side-effects and risks:

- the same risks as cocaine but even harder to control as the high can be so intense. Smoking can cause breathing problems including 'crack cough' and 'crack lung'

CLASS A DRUGS

ecstasy

e, pills, brownies, burgers, hug drug, 'Mitsubishis', 'Rolexs', 'Dolphins', 'Doves'

Can cause psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- tablets of different shapes, size and colour (but often white)
- increasingly common in powder form
- swallowed

Feels like:

- feeling alert and in tune with the surroundings
- sound, colour and emotions seem much more intense
- feeling able to dance for hours
- feeling great love for other people
- effects last from 3-6 hours

CLASS A DRUGS

Possible side-effects and risks:

- tiredness and depression for days afterwards
- liver, kidney and heart problems
- possible memory loss
- possible brain damage causing depression in later life
- risk of overheating and dehydration if dancing energetically without taking breaks or drinking enough fluids (people on ecstasy should sip no more than a pint of non-alcoholic fluid such as fruit juice, sports drinks or water every hour)
- tolerance can build up, meaning people need more to get the same high
- you can never tell what's in a pill – there could be other risks and side effects

CLASS A DRUGS

heroin

smack, brown, horse, gear, junk, h, jack, scag

Can cause physical and psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- brownish-white powder that is smoked, snorted or dissolved and injected

Feels like:

- in small doses gives a sense of warmth and wellbeing
- in larger doses, makes people drowsy and relaxed

Possible side-effects and risks:

- the first dose of heroin can bring about dizziness and vomiting
- can result in overdose, coma and in some cases death
- overdose is more likely if mixed with other drugs, including alcohol
- risk of death from inhaling vomit, as heroin stops the body's cough reflex
- injecting can damage veins
- risk of catching dangerous infections like hepatitis B or C and HIV/AIDS through sharing injecting equipment
- those with a habit may end up taking the drug just to feel normal

CLASS A DRUGS

LSD

acid, trips, tabs, blotters, microdots, dots'

Can cause psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- 1/4-inch squares of paper, often with a picture on one side
- microdots and dots are tiny tablets
- can also be a liquid
- swallowed or sometimes injected

Feels like:

- effects are known as a 'trip' and can last for 8-12 hours
- people experience their surroundings in a very different way
- sense of movement and time may speed up or slow down
- objects, colours and sounds may be distorted

Possible side-effects and risks:

- can complicate mental health problems
- once the experience or 'trip' starts it cannot be stopped
- trips can be 'bad' which can be terrifying
- 'flashbacks' can be experienced where parts of a trip are re-lived some time after the event

CLASS A DRUGS

magic mushrooms

liberties, magics, mushies, liberty cap

Can cause psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- there are two main types of magic mushrooms, either small skinny mushrooms which are usually brown or red and white toadstools
- eaten raw, dried, cooked in food, or stewed into a tea

Feels like:

- similar effect to LSD, but the trip is often milder and shorter (about 4 hours)

Possible side-effects and risks:

- stomach pains, sickness and diarrhoea
- can complicate mental health problems
- eating the wrong kind of mushroom can cause serious illness and even fatal poisoning

CLASS A DRUGS

methamphetamine

crystal meth, ice, glass, tina

Can cause physical and psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- tablets, powder or crystals (sometimes called Ice)
- smoked, snorted up the nose or sometimes dissolved and injected

Feels like:

- intense rush that can last for up to 12 hours
- suppresses appetite and keeps you awake

Possible side-effects and risks:

- nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea,
- weight loss, seizures,
- skin ulcers, mouth ulcers
- mental health problems

CLASS B DRUGS

cannabis

marijuana, draw, dope, blow, weed, puff, shit, hash, ganja, spliff, wacky backy

Can cause psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- solid, dark lump (`resin') or leaves, stalks and seeds that look like tightly packed dried herbs (`grass'/'weed'/'herbal')
- leaves, stalks and seeds that look like tightly packed dried herbs (`grass'/'weed'/'herbal')
- with stronger herbal varieties often called `skunk'
- can be rolled (usually with tobacco) in a spliff or joint, smoked on its own in a special pipe, or cooked and eaten in food

Feels like:

- people feel relaxed and talkative

CLASS B DRUGS

Possible side-effects and risks:

- reduced ability to learn and concentrate
- craving for food (the 'munchies')
- possible memory loss
- tiredness and lack of energy
- lower motivation
- paranoia and anxiety
- can make an existing mental health problem worse
- increased risk of developing mental health problems, including schizophrenia
- the risks to mental health could be worse if you smoke a lot, are young and smoke strong cannabis, like skunk
- breathing disorders, including lung cancer
- cooking the drug then eating it can make the effects more intense and harder to control
- using it regularly can cut a man's sperm count and suppress ovulation in women
- could get hooked on cigarettes if smoked with tobacco

CLASS B DRUGS

mephedrone

meph, MC, MCAT, m-cat, 4-MMC, Miaow, Meow Meow, Bubbles, Bounce, Charge, Drone, White Magic

And not to be confused with Methadone

Looks like/used:

- fine white, off-white or yellowish powder, capsules and pills
- snorted or wrapped in paper and swallowed (‘bombed’ is a slang name for this). Can also be smoked, and in some cases people inject it

Feels like:

- Being alert, confident, euphoric and talkative. Feeling of greater empathy with people nearby

Possible side-effects and risks:

- anxiety and paranoia
- it can over stimulate the nervous system which can cause fits, agitation and hallucinations
- it can also over stimulate the heart and circulation

CLASS B DRUGS

speed

amphetamines, whizz, uppers, amph, billy, sulphate

Can cause psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- grey or white powder or tablets
- snorted (powder), swallowed, smoked,
- injected or dissolved in a drink

Feels like:

- being alert and excited with a racing mind, feelings of confidence and energy

Possible side-effects and risks:

- loss of appetite
- tiredness and depression for one or two days after use – sometimes longer
- some people feel tense and anxious while taking the drug
- high doses repeated over a few days can cause panic and hallucinations
- long-term use puts a strain on the heart
- using a lot over the years can lead to mental illness or dependence
- taking it with Viagra can increase the risk of heart problems

CLASS C DRUGS

anabolic steroids

'Roids, Sustanon, 250, Deca-Durabolin, Dianabol, Anavar, Stanozolol

Can cause psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- tablets which are swallowed
- liquids which are injected

Feels like:

- feelings of aggression and able to train harder (so popular with athletes)
- helps build up muscle
- helps recovery from strenuous exercise

Possible side-effects and risks:

- for men: erection problems, breast growth, shrinking testicles, sterility, acne, increased chance of liver failure and heart attack
- for women: facial hair, deepening voice, shrinking breasts, possible miscarriage and stillbirth
- dramatic mood swings, depression, paranoia and sleep problems
- stops young people growing properly
- damage to veins and muscles if injected

CLASS C DRUGS

tranquillisers

jellies, benzos, eggs, norries, rugby balls, vallies, moggies, mazzies, roofies, downer

Can cause physical dependence

Looks like/used:

- tablets or capsules
- swallowed (or sometimes injected)
- some people are prescribed them

Feels like:

- feeling calm
- relief from tension and anxiety
- in larger doses can make people drowsy and forgetful

Possible side-effects and risks:

- some can cause a temporary loss of short-term memory
- some people can suffer panic attacks when trying to quit
- extremely dangerous if mixed with alcohol
- can be very dangerous if injected

CLASS C DRUGS

ketamine

green, k, Special k, super k, vitamin k (sometimes passed off as ecstasy)

Can cause psychological dependence

Looks like/used:

- grainy white powder or tablet
- can be a liquid
- swallowed or snorted

Feels like:

- a numbing of the body and the senses including a decrease in feeling pain
- often described as an 'out of the body' experience
- can cause hallucinations (similar to LSD)
- the experience lasts for between half an hour to several hours and the after-effects can be felt for some hours afterwards

CLASS C DRUGS

Possible side-effects and risks:

- very serious and painful bladder and urinary tract problems
- panic attacks and worsening of mental health problems,
- being unable to physically move
- people can injure themselves accidentally through not being able to feel pain
- if a lot is taken, especially with alcohol, it can slow down breathing and heart rate to dangerous levels
- very dangerous if mixed with other drugs - mixing with stimulants, like ecstasy or speed, can cause high blood pressure, while mixing with depressants, like alcohol or heroin, can make someone unconscious
- people can die from inhaling their own vomit when unconscious

OTHER HIGHS [AND LOWS]

Some substances are treated differently by the law. Alcohol, tobacco and glues are all legal in some circumstances, but they are restricted because they can cause harm. Some substances are so new that they are not restricted. These are called 'legal highs'.

alcohol

Feels like:

- exaggerates the mood (good or bad!)
- can reduce inhibitions and make people feel more sociable
- can reduce feelings of anxiety

Possible side effects and risks:

- can make some people aggressive
- unsafe sex

- increased risk of being involved in violence (especially boys), being sexually assaulted (especially girls), having an accident or being robbed
- mixing drinks or mixing drink with drugs can be very dangerous
- if unconscious, increased risk of choking on own vomit
- alcohol poisoning (which can be fatal)
- heart and liver damage and risk of some cancers especially stomach, mouth and breast cancer
- addictive for some people

It's legal:

- for over 18s
- for 16 and 17 year olds to have beer or cider with a meal in a bar or restaurant if bought for them by an adult who is with them

FRANK FACT

- one unit of alcohol is a single measure of spirits or half a pint of ordinary strength beer – but a large glass of wine or a pint of stronger beer or cider can be 3 units
- men should not regularly drink more than 3 to 4 units a day, and women should not regularly drink more than 2 to 3 units a day
- coffee doesn't sober you up; only time helps the body get rid of alcohol
- alcohol dehydrates the body

tobacco

Looks like/used:

- dried and shredded (brown) leaves of the tobacco plant
- smoked or chewed
- sometimes, cannabis is added to make a 'spliff' or 'joint'

Feels like:

- smokers say it relaxes them and makes them feel better

Possible side effects and risks:

- first time smokers often feel dizzy or sick
- nicotine speeds up the heart rate and raises blood pressure
- increased ageing of the skin
- risk of lung damage including emphysema and cancer
- increased chance of heart problems
- smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of low birth weight
- addictive

- tobacco smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals including arsenic, caffeine, mercury, lead and tar
- smoking any drug gets it to the brain quickly
- smoking contributes to 120,000 premature deaths each year in the UK

FRANK FACT

It's against the law to sell cigarettes, tobacco or tobacco products to under-18s

'legal highs'

Looks like/used:

- there are many different 'legal highs' but most come as mixtures in pills or powders sold in branded packaging
- to try to get around the law suppliers sell 'legal highs' as research chemicals or plant food that are not for human consumption

Feels like:

- mimics the effects of illegal drugs, such as cocaine and ecstasy

Possible side effects and risks:

- there has been very little or no useful research into the short, medium and long term effects on 'legal highs'
- it is becoming increasingly clear that 'legal highs' are far from harmless and have similar health risks to illegal drugs
- reduced inhibitions, drowsiness, excited or paranoid states, seizures, coma and even death are possible side effects – with users ending up in hospital
- using with alcohol or other drugs will increase the risks

Brand name examples include: Benzo Fury, Ivory Wave, Eric 3, Diablo.

Claims made by suppliers that their drugs or products are 'legal' are unreliable. It is likely drugs sold as 'legal highs' may contain mixtures of one or more substances that are actually illegal to possess.

FRANK FACT

Just because a substance is called a 'legal high' doesn't mean that it is either safe to use or legal to possess and supply.

poppers

Looks like/used:

- small bottles filled with goldcoloured liquid chemicals (called alkyl nitrites)
- sniffed straight from the bottle or from something absorbent, like a cloth or from the end of an unlit cigarette

Feels like:

- a short, sharp head rush that lasts a couple of minutes
- used to enhance sexual experiences
- boosts the effect of other stimulants like ecstasy

Possible side effects and risks:

- nausea, and feeling faint and weak (especially if taken when dancing)
- severe headache and a rash around the mouth
- some men can have difficulty getting an erection after sniffing poppers
- can burn the skin and can be fatal if swallowed
- highly flammable
- dangerous for people with chest or heart problems, anaemia or glaucoma and for people using Viagra or other medications that affect blood pressure
- people can die from inhaling their own vomit

It's legal:

- to possess or use poppers
- to sell them in certain circumstances if sold as room aromas or deodorisers (e.g. sex shops, clubs and gay bars often sell them in this way)

volatile substances

(including gases, glues and aerosols)

Looks like/used:

- products such as gas lighter refills, butane cans, aerosols containing products such as hairspray, deodorants and air fresheners, nail varnish, tins or tubes of glue, some paints, thinners and correcting fluids
- sniffed or breathed into the lungs from a cloth, sleeve or plastic bag
- gas products are sometimes squirted directly into the back of the throat

Feels like:

- effects feel similar to being very drunk including excitement, happiness, slurred speech and loss of concentration
- can make some people hallucinate
- effects don't last very long, but people can remain intoxicated all day by repeating the dose

Possible side effects and risks:

- can cause instant death
- nausea, vomiting, black-outs and potentially fatal heart problems
- risk of suffocation
- accidents can happen when someone is high because their senses are affected. Using with other drugs and alcohol can increase this risk
- long-term abuse of glue can damage the brain, liver and kidneys
- can cause psychological dependence

It's against the law:

- for shopkeepers to sell gas lighter refills to anyone under 18
- for shopkeepers to sell gases, glues and aerosols to under-18s, or to people acting for them, if they suspect the product is intended for misuse

FRANK FACT

- misuse of volatile substances causes more deaths among young people aged 10-15 than Class A drug use
- abusing volatile substances can cause instant death, even if it's the first time
- if a child is high on a volatile substance, don't scare them or shout at them as this can be dangerous

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

Family Lives www.familylives.org.uk
Family Lives provides a telephone helpline, email and live chat service for disadvantaged and vulnerable families, and those suffering emotional and mental health difficulties.

Helpline: 0808 800 2222 (open Monday to Sunday from 07.00-24.00. 17 hours per day, 365 days a year).

Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk
The Young Minds service is aimed at parents or carers concerned about the behaviour, mental health or emotional wellbeing of a child or young person.

Helpline: 0808 802 5544 (every Monday-Friday from 09.30 to 16.00, with voicemail service outside these hours). Service closed on Bank Holidays.

Useful organisations

ChildLine www.childline.org.uk
ChildLine is the UK's free, confidential helpline for children and young people. Trained volunteers are on hand to provide advice and support, by phone and online, 24 hours a day. Whenever and wherever children need us, we'll be there.
0800 11 11

Re-Solv www.re-solv.org
Charity dedicated to the prevention of volatile substance abuse.
tel: 01785 810762
information@re-solv.org
Twitter: @resolvUK

Solv-it www.solveitonline.co.uk
Charity who offer direct counselling services for volatile substance abuse
01536 414690
info@solveitonline.co.uk

Other websites

www.drugscope.org.uk In-depth information on all aspects of drugs use.

www.addaction.org.uk For advice about drug and alcohol treatment

www.adfam.org.uk Support materials for people with a family member who takes drugs. Can help you find local support groups.

www.netmums.com Provides online support on all parenting issues in a friendly, supportive, non-judgemental environment.

www.thesite.org
A guide to the 'real world' for young people aged 16–25.

Quiz answers from page 11. How did you score?

A, B and E are fiction.
A – No-one can ever be sure of what they're taking. Drugs are not always pure, not always what they are sold as and users can't know what they've been mixed with.
B – You can never be sure how a drug will affect you – even if you have taken it before.
E – Some people who develop a drug problem start on softer drugs. But most people who take soft drugs do not move on to harder substances.
Fact – C, D, F, G and H are true. It's even more dangerous to mix different drugs and some combinations can be fatal.

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by emailing frank@talktofrank.com

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