



## Drug Awareness for Parents

### What are drugs?

A drug is a substance that affects the body by interfering with the brain's neurotransmitters (pathways for nerve impulses). Drugs can be legal (prescriptions, alcohol, over-the-counter medications, cigarettes) or illegal (marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine, methamphetamines or meth, heroin).

### Types of drugs:

**Depressants** – these drugs depress or slow down the function of the central nervous system. Moderate doses make a person feel relaxed. Larger doses can cause unconsciousness by slowing down a person's breathing and heart rate which can lead to death. A person's speech will be slurred and their movements sluggish and uncoordinated.

These drugs include:

Alcohol

Opioids (heroin), morphine, codeine, methadone, fentanyl, carfentanil, oxycodone

Minor tranquilizers (Valium, Xanax)

Vapors inhaled from gasoline, glue, paint or lighter fluid

**Stimulants** – these drugs speed up or stimulate the central nervous system and can make a person feel more awake, alert or confident. Stimulants raise the person's heart rate, body temperature and blood pressure.

These drugs can also reduce appetite, dilate the pupils (eyes), increase agitation and cause sleep disturbance.

These drugs include:

Caffeine

Nicotine, in tobacco

Ephedrine, in medicines for bronchitis, hay fever or asthma

Amphetamines and methamphetamines (known as 'speed', 'ice' or 'crystal meth')

Cocaine (known as 'coke', 'blow', 'crack', 'rock' or 'snow')

**Hallucinogens** – these drugs distort the user's perception of reality. Hallucinogens cause: dilation of the pupils, loss of appetite, increased laughing or talking, jaw clenching, sweating, stomach cramping and nausea. Visual (seeing), auditory (hearing) and tactile (feeling) hallucinations may occur, causing the user to see, hear or feel things that are not actually occurring.

These drugs include:

LSD (known as 'trips', 'acid' or 'microdots')

Magic mushrooms (known as "mushies" or 'shrooms')

Ecstasy (known as 'E', 'XTC' and 'Eccies')

Ketamine (known as 'K' or 'Special K')

Marijuana (cannabis) does not truly fit into any of the above categories. Cannabis can act as a depressant, a stimulant or can have hallucinogenic-like effects for people depending on individual variations and circumstances. Research has shown that cannabis can be more harmful to teenagers (or younger children) because their brains are still developing.

### **Why do people use drugs?**

There are many reasons why people may try or use drugs: curiosity, stress, poor self-image, anger, to fit in with their peers, rejection, depression, boredom or to escape from reality. Drugs do not usually solve problems but they can create more or worsen them.

### **What is drug addiction?**

Drug addiction is a brain disease. Drug use leads to changes in the structure and function of the brain. Drug addicts need professional help to treat and overcome this disease.

### **Signs of drug use or addiction:**

Lose interest in school/work  
Change in friends (hanging out with other people who use drugs)  
Become moody, negative, cranky or worried all of the time  
Desire or want to be left alone  
Have trouble concentrating  
Sleep a lot at school/work  
Get caught fighting  
Have constant red or puffy eyes or a runny nose  
Loses or gains a significant amount weight

### **Where to turn for help?**

Drug users may know the negative and harmful effects of drug abuse but may not be able to stop the drug use on their own.

Here are some resources to help with information/treatment/emergency assistance:

C.U.R.E. Triad (Community's United Response to the Epidemic); 336-308-0822; [curetriad@gmail.com](mailto:curetriad@gmail.com) or [www.curetriad.com](http://www.curetriad.com)

GCSTOP (Guilford County Solution to The Opioid Problem); 336-505-8122;  
<https://www.facebook.com/GCSTOP/> or <https://chcs.uncg.edu/research/projects/guilford-solution-to-the-opioid-problem/>

In case of a drug related emergency or overdose, call 911. After the emergency is resolved or overdose is reversed, the Emergency Medical Personnel can provide additional information about treatment options.

Free language assistance is available upon request.