

# DRUGS

WHAT YOU NEED TO

# KNOW

In Arabic, "SKOUN" means the internal tranquility and silence. "SKOUN" is also an Arabic punctuation mark, which indicates a pause while pronouncing a word.



# WHY DO SOME YOUNG PEOPLE USE DRUGS?



There are many reasons why some teenagers use drugs. Many use drugs because they see their friends, parents, sisters, or brothers using them and think it's okay. Some think it makes them look cool because they see someone famous on TV using drugs. Others try drugs because they are curious or want to forget their problems and escape their negative feelings such as loneliness, isolation, sadness, helplessness, and hopelessness. Some teenagers don't know that drugs can be harmful and that they can affect their lives negatively.

# There is a way to protect yourself!

## **Be smart.**

Being curious about drugs is understandable. The problem with trying drugs, regardless of the substance, is this: till this day, there is no scientific way of finding out who, among those who try drugs a few times, will get addicted and who will not. In other words, you'll know where you started (just having a little fun), but you don't know where you'll end up.

## **Join the majority.**

You don't have to use drugs because you think everybody else is. Most teenagers do not use drugs. 97% of Lebanese high school students surveyed in 2009 have never tried drugs. Middle school students have even lower rates of drug use, so how about joining the majority?

## **Try talking.**

Our problems can get the best of us sometimes and may seem too difficult to solve. One fact about drugs that has remained unchanged over time is: taking drugs to run away from our problems only creates new ones. Learn it. Know it. Tell your friends about it. Talking about our problems with friends, family, teachers, or consulting with professionals (therapists, psychiatrists, and school counselors) is much more likely to lead to a solution than drugs ever would.

## **Get Up! Get Going!**

You can always have fun. Get out and walk. Turn up the music and dance in your room. Join a gym. Find a hobby or hone a talent. Organize weekend activities. And if it takes a good book to get you going, snuggle up!

## **What is addiction?**

When a person is addicted, he or she cannot stop using drugs even if they want to and even after they realize the negative effects on their health and lives. People addicted to drugs may lose their jobs, drop out of school, break ties with friends and family, and realize that the focus of their lives is taking their daily dose.



**Life is always changing. How many times have you heard of people who spent twenty or so years of their lives doing something and then all of a sudden decided to change their career or move to another country and start all over again? Your brain and your body are the only two things that you're going to keep forever so you might want to keep them up and running for as long as you can. Addiction to drugs can damage your brain.**

## If you'd like to know a little about drugs, here is some information about a few of them:

### **Cannabis (Hashish, hash, weed, marijuana)**

Cannabis can foster feelings of relaxation and joy, increase appetite, and affect your senses. Many people think that cannabis use is harmless and legal in Lebanon. The truth is cannabis is both illegal and harmful. Cannabis contains more cancer-causing substances than cigarettes. While one-time use is not addictive, it can still put you at a risk of having a car accident as it slows down your reactions. Regular use can lead to addiction, demotivation, paranoia, and disruption in memory leading to an inability to learn new things! Cannabis is illegal to have, use, give away, or sell.

Jail sentences can go from three months to life imprisonment for dealers.

### **Alcohol**

Alcohol is a drug like any other. It alters consciousness, emotions, and behaviors. Drinking might first offer pleasurable feelings of relaxation, but at the same time could lead to behaviors with unwanted consequences such as unsafe sex which could possibly lead to pregnancy or to contracting sexually transmitted infections. One of the most reported dangers related

to alcohol are road accidents. Alcohol can cause blurred vision, coordination problems, fatigue, and slowed breathing. In cases of binge-drinking (drinking large amounts of alcohol in one event), it could lead to loss of consciousness. Occasional drinking does not lead to addiction, but regular drinking or binge-drinking every weekend, for example, could evolve into one of the hardest addictions to kick- alcoholism.

Alcohol is illegal to have or use under the age of 18 in Lebanon.

### Tobacco

Tobacco is found in cigarettes and waterpipes (shishas/arguilehs). Tobacco affects the development of the body, and the younger you start smoking, the more strongly you might get addicted. Smoking can also lead to diseases such as respiratory problems (shortness of breath, chronic bronchitis, and asthma-like symptoms), heart disease, and stroke. It stains teeth, nails, and fingers just as it does lungs. It dulls the skin and hair, and is linked to premature ageing and hair loss. Smokers feel anxious and irritable if they go longer than usual without their cigarette or waterpipe, and might even get hostile and a little down. It is very important to note that the idea that water removes toxins from waterpipe smoke is a myth. Smoking waterpipe for an hour is equivalent to 100-200 cigarettes.

### Inhalants

Inhalants include a large group of chemicals found in household products such as gasoline, nail polish remover, glue, thinner, detergents, sprays, markers, paint, and correction fluid. Using these products can result in immediate highs. Inhalants can seriously damage your brain and heart. "Sudden sniffing death" can also happen anytime inhalants are used, even the first time. This is caused by suffocation, choking on vomit, or having a heart attack. Also, inhalants starve the body of oxygen causing the heart to dangerously beat irregularly. Finally, chronic use can lead to liver, lung, kidney, and hearing problems and muscle atrophy.

### Heroin

Heroin is one of the fastest-addicting drugs out there. It comes in powder form and is sometimes injected. It clouds thinking, relieves pain, and gives a euphoric rush when smoked, inhaled, or injected. It is this rush that keeps people coming back to the drug. Heroin use is linked with grave effects on the physical health: collapsed veins, spontaneous abortion, abscesses, skin and dental problems, infectious diseases (HIV/AIDS & hepatitis B&C), infection of the heart lining and valves, and permanent damage to the lungs, liver, and kidneys. Heroin is illegal to have, use, give away, or sell. Jail sentences can go from three months to life imprisonment for dealers.

### Cocaine and Crack

Cocaine is a powerfully addictive substance that fosters feelings of euphoria and energy. Crack is a purified and more concentrated form of Cocaine. It is more powerful and addictive than Cocaine. The short-lived high of Cocaine or Crack is followed by feelings of depression, emptiness, and/or even loneliness. Short-term effects cause dilated pupils, nausea, abdominal pain, and increased heart rate and body temperature. Snorting can cause permanent damage to the nasal tissue and injection could lead to contracting HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis B and/or C. Repeated use can lead to addiction, auditory hallucinations (hearing things that are not there), paranoia, irritability, restlessness, and anxiety. Cocaine can cause lethal heart attacks (overdose) or strokes. Cocaine is illegal to have, use, give away, or sell. Jail sentences can go from three months to life imprisonment for dealers.

### Party drugs

Not everybody who goes to electronic, rave, or trance parties takes drugs. Some people do, however. And these are a few things they need to know:

#### Ecstasy

Ecstasy is a stimulant that comes in the shape of a pill. You never know what chemicals are in Ecstasy pills and that is what makes them dangerous. It creates

a sense of euphoria, energy, empathy, and peacefulness. Ecstasy deaths occur not due to overdose, but to dehydration and heat strokes (increased body temperature). Even one-time heat strokes may cause permanent brain damage and memory impairment. For a few days (in some cases weeks) after taking the drug, it can cause depression, anxiety, and paranoia. Sometimes methamphetamine is sold as ecstasy, which is something to be very careful about (review methamphetamine). Ecstasy is illegal to have, use, give away, or sell. Jail sentences can go from three months to life imprisonment for dealers.

#### Amphetamine

Amphetamine or speed comes in pills or powder form. It affects the central nervous system by increasing your energy and making you more alert. It can also make you feel anxious, sad, aggressive, and even paranoid. Amphetamine or speed causes insomnia, headaches, diarrhea, or constipation. It increases your heartbeat, blood pressure, and body temperature. You can get addicted to amphetamine or speed. Prolonged use of amphetamines causes brain damage, weakens your immune system, and triggers mental illness. Using Amphetamine can lead to a fatal overdose. Amphetamine is illegal to have, use, give away, or sell. Jail sentences can go from three months to life imprisonment for dealers.



### Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine comes in pill form, capsules, powder, and chunks. It is the strongest form of amphetamine. Many times Methamphetamine is sold as or mistaken for ecstasy in parties. It creates feelings of euphoria and energy to the extent where the user can go for extended periods of time without food or sleep. It is a highly addictive drug that can cause paranoia, hallucinations, violent behavior, depression, long-term brain damage, and death. Methamphetamine is illegal to have, use, give away, or sell. Jail sentences can go from three months to life imprisonment for dealers.



### LSD/Acid

LSD/Acid is a white, odorless crystalline powder that is soluble in water. It is usually blotted on paper. It produces hallucinations. Some LSD trips are fun; others are very scary and could get dangerous in crowded environments such as parties. Flashbacks of LSD trips can happen even after years of no use. For example, people might re-experience previous LSD trips even if they hadn't used the drug for a long time. LSD is illegal to have, use, give away, or sell. Jail sentences can go from three months to life imprisonment for dealers.



### GHB

GHB comes in clear liquid, white powder, tablet, and capsule forms that can be easily slipped into a drink because GHB is colorless, tasteless, and odorless. It is a powerful depressant that can be used as a rape drug. That's why when your drink leaves your hand, it is not yours anymore. GHB produces feelings of relaxation and self-confidence in small doses. However, you can easily take too much without knowing it. Larger doses can quickly result in loss of muscle control, vomiting, seizures, unconsciousness, coma, and death. GHB is highly addictive. GHB is illegal to have, use, give away, or sell. Jail sentences can go from three months to life imprisonment for dealers.



### Ketamine

Ketamine was initially invented as a powerful horse anesthetic. It comes in three main forms: powder, tablet and liquid. The most common form is white powder which is snorted. It causes dreamlike hallucinations. On the long-run, it can cause paralysis, fatal respiratory problems, and permanent brain damage.



### Rohypnol

Rohypnol is a strong sedative that can come in pill or liquid form. It can be slipped into people's drinks to make them unable to fight off or escape sexual assault. Rohypnol overdoses could lead to coma or death. It is an addictive drug.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND CANNABIS

## ? IS MIXING STIMULANTS WITH ALCOHOL SAFE?

Mixing stimulants (Ecstasy, Cocaine, Amphetamines, Methamphetamines) with alcohol could lead to alcohol poisoning. Stimulants do not give us energy, they mask exhaustion. While getting tired or drowsy is our body's last resort for telling us to stop drinking, masking this feeling might lead us to unknowingly drink more till we reach alcohol poisoning.

## ? WHAT IS ALCOHOL POISONING?

Drinking too much too fast. It is dangerous because alcohol is a depressant. This might sound a little counterintuitive. How can something that apparently makes people look so giddy, goofy, or free be called a depressant? Alcohol affects the central nervous system by slowing down the heart rate, gag reflex, and physical reflexes. Alcohol poisoning occurs after binge drinking episodes when blood alcohol reaches dangerous levels leading to loss of consciousness followed by coma or death. Many times death is caused by the impaired gag reflex; i.e., choking on one's own vomit because the natural ability to expel it outside the body is impaired.

## **? IS MIXING ENERGY DRINKS WITH ALCOHOL SAFE?**

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While mixing alcohol with stimulants is more dangerous than mixing it with energy drinks, it is still an unsafe practice. It can lead to heart rhythm problems, increased dehydration, and worse hangovers. Again, it makes you drink longer into the night possibly putting you at a higher risk for road accidents.

## **? DOES ALCOHOL AFFECT MEN AND WOMEN THE SAME?**

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Alcohol affects men and women differently! Short- and long- term effects of alcohol are worse for females. On the short run, women get drunk faster and have a longer/worse hangover than men, and on the long run, they develop more severe physical problems as the same amount of alcohol can cause more damage to the body organs and brain in women as compared to men. Nevertheless, generally speaking, more men are addicted to alcohol and at risk of abusing it than women are.

## **? DOES ALCOHOL REALLY MAKE PEOPLE FEEL BETTER?**

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No. Alcohol disinhibits people (while also acting as a central nervous system depressant). Disinhibition means loss or lowering of restraints. People become less shy and controlled, and more impulsive and “off guard”; so if you’re feeling down and getting drunk, you might find yourself crying, and if you’re happy or excited, you might feel less embarrassed to express it when under the influence of alcohol. Keep one thing in mind though, alcohol makes people more impulsive: you might make decisions that you later regret such as assaulting someone physically or sexually, driving really fast, having unsafe sex, or taking drugs.

## **? DO COFFEE AND COLD SHOWERS MAKE A HANGOVER BETTER?**

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Nothing makes a hangover better except time- not coffee, cold showers, and sleeping or walking it off. Keep in mind that caffeine absorbs some of the water in the body, which makes the hangover last longer. Try drinking water to replenish what your body lost as alcohol dehydrates it.

## **? CANNABIS (MARIJUANA, HASHISH) IS NOT ADDICTIVE, RIGHT?**

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Wrong. Regular use can lead to addiction, i.e., a person addicted to cannabis might continue to seek and use marijuana despite its negative effects on mental functions (memory, attention, and learning at school or on the job), physical activity (sports), family relationships, and recreational activities.

## **? CANNABIS GROWS NATURALLY. IF IT’S NOT SYNTHETIC, HOW CAN IT BE HARMFUL?**

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Marijuana smoke contains four times more tar (causes cancer, turns lungs black, and causes respiratory infections and coughing) and around 50-70% more carcinogenic material (cancer-causing substances) than cigarette smoke. It lowers our immunity, and is linked to depression, anxiety, and personality changes.

For confidential advice, treatment,  
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