

## What Is a Drug?

A drug is any substance that changes how the body works once it gets inside the body. Some examples of drugs are nicotine, cocaine, steroids, marijuana, inhalants, and caffeine. Different drugs have different effects on the body. Some drugs can cause you to hallucinate (i.e., see or hear things that other people do not). Others may speed up or slow down your system.

## Why Do People Use Drugs?

People may use drugs for a number of reasons. Some take them out of curiosity to see what they feel like or because their friends are using them. Others take them to escape painful feelings and situations. Some use drugs because they are addicted and they cannot stop; the drug becomes more important than family, friends, or school. Still others use drugs because they believe in myths - that a drug can make someone more confident, get more work done, feel less sad, improve their sex life, and have more fun. The biggest myth is that occasional drug use is harmless.

## What Effects Can Drugs Have On Me?

Depending on the frequency and type of use, drugs can have severe and long-lasting effects on the body. Some drugs will cause damage after just one use, while others will hurt the body and mind more slowly. Here are some examples of possible effects different drugs can have:

### *Nicotine*

Diminished sense of smell and taste, smoker's cough, emphysema, heart disease, stroke, cancer, frequent colds, and chronic bronchitis.

### *Cocaine and Crack*

Heart attacks, strokes, respiratory failure, seizures, and reduction of the body's ability to resist infection.

### *Heroin*

Dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, clouded mental function, slow heart rate, coma, and brain damage.

### *Steroids*

Liver tumors, high blood pressure, hair loss, severe acne, testicular shrinking, stunted growth, and an irregular menstrual cycle.

### *Marijuana*

Sleeplessness, reduced concentration, paranoia, hallucinations, intense anxiety, cancer, and increased risk of infertility.

### *Inhalants*

Severe mood swings, suffocation, loss of sense of smell, nosebleeds, liver, lung and kidney impairment, and brain damage.

### *Caffeine*

Sleeplessness, reduced concentration, intense anxiety, and restlessness.

## How Can I Get Help?

Depending on the type of drug use, there are many different types of treatments available. For severe drug problems, there are detoxification and medication programs that require the patient to stay either in a hospital or treatment center. Also, there are programs that are administered at a clinic that the patient can attend daily.

Treatments for less severe problems include individual, family, or couple's therapy. Also, there are many support groups available for drug users and their family members or loved ones. For more information, check out these web sites for call these numbers.

- National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Service - (800) 662-HELP
- The National Drug and Alcohol Abuse Referral - (800) 821-4357
- Narcotics Anonymous - [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)
- Cocaine Anonymous - [www.ca.org](http://www.ca.org)

## Avoiding Alcohol and Drug Problems

- Drug and alcohol use and abuse is preventable.
- Get educated. Know the facts. Once you do, you will realize that it is not worth endangering your career, your health, your relationships, and your future.
- Avoid peer pressure. Think ahead about how to say "no."
- Avoid situations where people will be drinking and using drugs. Get involved in non-drinking activities.
- Confront your problem if you have one.
- Get help for the underlying problems of family, relationships, anxiety or depression.
- Educate others.