

Cocaine

Also known as coke, crack, blow, Charlie, snow

Cocaine is a powerful stimulant made from the leaves of the coca plant native to South America. It generally takes the form of a white powder and is inhaled through the nose or sometimes injected or smoked.

Cocaine is a Class A drug. If you are caught in possession of cocaine, you could get up to seven years in prison or an unlimited fine, or both. Dealing in cocaine could get you a life sentence in prison or an unlimited fine, or both.

The serious effects of Cocaine...

On your brain

➔ The high created by taking cocaine disrupts normal **brain communication**. ➔ Repeated use of cocaine leads to **long-term changes** in brain functioning that can lead to addiction.

On your mental health & behaviour

➔ Many cocaine users become addicted and go on serial 'binges' which are **seriously damaging** to both physical and mental health. ➔ Cocaine bingeing can make you **irritable and restless**, and cause panic attacks, insomnia, hallucinations and acute psychosis. ➔ Research shows that 30 per cent of cocaine addicts have **anxiety disorders**, 67 per cent suffer from clinical depression, 25 per cent experience paranoia, and 85 per cent are also dependent on alcohol. ➔ Cocaine use has been linked with **violent and erratic behaviour** and is associated with violent and tragic deaths through homicide, suicide and accidents. ➔ One major police force reported that 41 per cent of people **arrested for violence** had used cocaine or crack cocaine. (Crack cocaine is a particularly strong form of cocaine which has led to children engaging in violent acts.)

On your physical health

➔ Cocaine **affects the flow of blood** through your body and raises your body temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure. ➔ It can cause headaches and stomach problems, including abdominal pain and nausea. In some cases, cocaine has led to a **heart attack, stroke, coma** or even **sudden death**. ➔ Snorting cocaine can **destroy the nose septum** (the wall between your nostrils) and can lead to a loss of the sense of smell, nosebleeds, problems with swallowing and a persistent runny nose. ➔ Taking cocaine through the mouth can lead to **severe bowel gangrene**. ➔ Those who inject cocaine are at greater risk of contracting **HIV/AIDS**, either through using contaminated needles, or through engaging in high-risk sexual behaviour as a result of their intoxication. ➔ Almost 40 per cent of cocaine injectors will be exposed to **hepatitis C** within two years. Those who have been injecting cocaine for five years have a 50-80 per cent chance of contracting the virus.

DRUGS

They're just not worth it!

Don't be taken in by people who say that taking drugs is harmless fun. Any sense of excitement that drugs bring will only ever be short-lived, but the pain and distress they can cause may last a lifetime.

It is never right, wise or safe to take drugs. It is much better to avoid going to places where you know there will be drugs than to go along and regret it later.

If you take drugs, your physical and mental health will suffer and you may end up with a criminal record that will seriously limit your options in later life.

But without drugs, you can live a perfectly fulfilling life - and most young people do.



DRUG ALERT

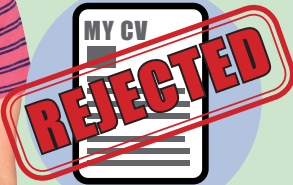




Want to get a visa to take the journey of a lifetime?



Want that job to set out on the career of your dreams?



Want to seize that opportunity to play for your favourite sports team?



These are just three of the possible barriers you could face if you have tested positive for drugs.

It is estimated that 30-40 per cent of teenagers in Britain have tried drugs. Some of your friends may tell you that taking drugs is harmless fun, and that it will make you feel better, give you greater energy, and make you more creative and lively. But the truth is that drugs can ruin your health, your sanity and your future life chances.

What are drugs?

A drug is a chemical substance which has a physical effect when introduced into the body. Some drugs are medically prescribed and are used to cure sickness. Other drugs, however, are taken for recreational purposes because of the effect they can have on a person's mood and energy levels. These drugs are generally illegal because of the harm they can cause to your mind and body.

The British government has classified illegal drugs according to three categories - A, B and C. Class A drugs are the most dangerous and carry the highest criminal penalties.

Cannabis

Also known as marijuana, pot, dope, weed, grass, hash

Cannabis comes from the plant Cannabis sativa. It is usually smoked in the form of a cigarette called a joint. Eighty per cent of cannabis currently available on the streets is a type of cannabis called skunk. This contains a much higher level of the psychoactive ingredient which causes physical and psychological harm than other forms of cannabis commonly used in the past.

Cannabis is a Class B drug. To be caught in possession of cannabis could get you up to five years in prison or an unlimited fine, or both. The penalty for dealing in cannabis is up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both.

The serious effects of Cannabis...



On your brain

➔ Cannabis can seriously alter the normal functioning of your brain and cause **permanent brain damage**. ➔ It can reduce your sense of time, colour and taste, and affect your emotions, your memory and your **ability to concentrate**. ➔ Taking cannabis in your teens can lead to a marked **drop in IQ** by the time you are in your twenties if you continue to use the drug. ➔ Cannabis has been found to have serious effects on the **academic performance** of students. ➔ Teenagers who use cannabis often end up dropping out of school and find it more difficult to **hold down a job** in later life.



On your mental health & behaviour

➔ It can be a significant cause of **psychosis, schizophrenia, depression** and **suicide**. ➔ Cannabis users are more likely to **commit suicide** than users of other drugs such as heroin or alcohol. ➔ There is a significant link between using cannabis and engaging in **violent activity**. ➔ If you drive, using cannabis more than doubles your risk of being **involved in a car accident**.



On your physical health

➔ Cannabis smoke contains many of the same substances that cause cancer among tobacco smokers, but in greater measure. That means cannabis smokers face severe **damage to their lungs** many years earlier than tobacco smokers. ➔ **Cancer** of the lungs, head, neck, bladder, tongue and testes have all been reported as effects of cannabis use. ➔ Cannabis suppresses the immune system, placing users at risk of **respiratory problems**: coughing, wheezing, sputum production, acute bronchitis and airway obstruction. ➔ One in six cannabis users become addicted to the drug and **cannabis acts as a gateway** to even more dangerous drugs. Weekly cannabis users are 60 times more likely to progress to other drugs than those who have never tried it. Almost all heroin addicts began on cannabis.

Ecstasy

Also known as E, brownies, dolphins, pills

Ecstasy is a man-made drug which causes hallucinations. It is generally taken in the form of a tablet or capsule and is associated with the nightclub scene because of the way it increases energy and offers a deep feeling of joy and release.

Ecstasy is a Class A drug. To be caught in possession of ecstasy could get you up to seven years in prison or an unlimited fine, or both. Dealing in ecstasy could get you a life sentence in prison or an unlimited fine, or both.

The serious effects of Ecstasy...



On your brain

➔ Ecstasy often causes **sleep problems, anxiety, confusion, depression**, and a craving for drugs. These negative effects can last for weeks. ➔ Users of ecstasy can experience **changes in brain activity** in areas that affect their emotions, thought patterns and physical movement. ➔ Many people who use ecstasy experience problems with **concentration** and **memory**. ➔ In some cases frequent ecstasy use may lead to **permanent brain damage**.



On your mental health & behaviour

➔ Taking ecstasy can lead to **psychological dependence** and **severe depression**. ➔ It can also make you anxious, restless, irritable, sad, impulsive and aggressive, and lead to sleep disturbances, a loss of appetite, and a **significant reduction** in your **mental abilities**. ➔ Ecstasy lowers inhibitions and is linked to high risk sexual behaviours that **can lead to HIV** and other sexually transmitted infections.



On your physical health

➔ Ecstasy can **raise the heart rate and blood pressure**, and lead to muscle tension, involuntary jaw clenching, nausea, blurred vision, faintness, and chills or sweating. ➔ Taking ecstasy can lead to an increase in body temperature and can result in **liver, kidney, or cardiovascular system failure**. In some cases it can even **cause death**. ➔ Other possible side-effects include: **seizures, diarrhoea, hepatitis, headaches, anorexia, stomach cramps, tremors, severe chest pain and urinary problems**.

