

## Common Drugs of Abuse/Misuse

### Drugs: What to Know

It's not hard to find drugs, and sometimes it may seem like everyone's doing them — or wanting you to do them. But as with anything that seems too good to be true, there are downsides (and dangers) to taking drugs.

### How Drugs Work

Drugs are chemicals or substances that change the way our bodies work. Some are medicines that help people when doctors prescribe them. Many have no medical use or benefits.

When taken (usually by swallowing, inhaling, or injecting), abused drugs find their way into the bloodstream. From there, they move to the brain and other parts of the body. In the brain, drugs may intensify or dull the senses, change how alert or sleepy people feel, and sometimes decrease physical pain.

Because of the way these drugs work on the brain, they affect the ability to make healthy choices and decisions. Even drinking makes people more likely to get involved in dangerous situations, like driving under the influence or having unprotected sex.

Although substances can feel good at first, they can do a lot of harm to the body and brain. Drinking alcohol, smoking or using tobacco, taking illegal drugs, even sniffing glue all damage the human body.

### Commonly abused drugs include:

- alcohol
- amphetamines
- bath salts
- cocaine and crack
- cough and cold medicines (DXM)
- depressants
- GHB
- heroin
- inhalants
- ketamine
- LSD
- MDMA/Ecstasy
- marijuana
- methamphetamine ("meth")
- mushrooms
- PCP
- prescription pain relievers (opioids)
- Rohypnol
- salvia

### Getting Help

If you think you — or a friend — may be addicted to drugs, talk to a parent, your doctor, school counselor, or nurse. They can help you get the help you need.

Several kinds of treatment are available for drug addiction. The two main types are **behavioral** (helping a person change behaviors) and **pharmacological** (treating a person by using medicine).

Experts in drug treatment teach people how to live without drugs — dealing with cravings, avoiding situations that could lead to drug use, and preventing and handling relapses.

It can be hard to overcome drug addiction without professional help and treatment. It takes time and isn't something that can be done alone — everyone needs support. Experts who help people with addictions are trained to help, not judge. To find a drug treatment center in your area, search online, check out the SAMHSA Treatment Locator, or ask a doctor or counselor for advice.

**Assignment:**

Fill out the graphic organizer using one of the info sheets on a commonly abused drugs. You may research one of your choice if you do not want to use one that if provided in the packet.

**Graphic Organizer: ATOD Unit**

Alternative Names:

How Is It Taken:

What it looks like:

**Drug Name**

Legal or Illegal?

Effects:

Risks:

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## Anabolic Steroids

Anabolic steroids are a group of powerful compounds closely related to the male sex hormone testosterone. Developed in the 1930s, steroids are seldom prescribed by physicians today. Current legitimate medical uses are limited to certain kinds of anemia, severe burns, and some types of breast cancer.

Taken in combination with a program of muscle-building exercise and diet, steroids may contribute to increases in body weight and muscular strength. Because of these properties, athletes in a variety of sports have used steroids since the 1950s, hoping to enhance performance. Today, they are being joined by increasing numbers of young people seeking to accelerate their physical development.

Steroid users subject themselves to more than 70 side effects ranging in severity from liver cancer to acne and including psychological as well as physical reactions. The liver and the cardiovascular and reproductive systems are most seriously affected by

steroid use. In males, use can cause withered testicles, sterility, and impotence. In females, irreversible masculine traits can develop along with breast reduction and sterility. Psychological effects in both sexes include very aggressive behavior known as "roid rage" and depression. While some side effects appear quickly, others, such as heart attacks and strokes, may not show up for years.

Signs of steroid use include quick weight and muscle gains (if steroids are being used in conjunction with a weight training program); behavioral changes, particularly increased aggressiveness and combativeness; jaundice, purple or red spots on the body; swelling of feet or lower legs; trembling; unexplained darkening of the skin; and persistent unpleasant breath odor.

Steroids are produced in tablet or capsule form for oral ingestion, or as a liquid for intramuscular injection.

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## Cocaine

Cocaine stimulates the central nervous system. Its immediate effects include dilated pupils and elevated blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, and body temperature. Occasional use can cause a stuffy or runny nose, while chronic use can ulcerate the mucous membrane of the nose. Injecting cocaine with contaminated equipment can cause AIDS, hepatitis, and other diseases. Preparation of freebase, which involves the use of volatile solvents, can result in death or injury from fire or explosion. Cocaine can produce psychological and

physical dependency, a feeling that the user cannot function without the drug. In addition, tolerance develops rapidly.

Crack or freebase rock is extremely addictive, and its effects are felt within 10 seconds. The physical effects include dilated pupils, increased pulse rate, elevated blood pressure, insomnia, loss of appetite, tactile hallucinations, paranoia, and seizures.

The use of cocaine can cause death by cardiac arrest or respiratory failure.

Type	What is it called?	What does it look like?	How is it used?
Cocaine	Coke Snow Flake White Blow Nose candy Big C Snowbirds Lady	White crystalline powder, often diluted with other ingredients	Inhaled through nasal passages Injected Smoked
Crack	Freebase rocks Rock	Light brown or beige pellets—or crystalline rocks that resemble coagulated soap; often packaged in small vials	Smoked

## Cannabis

All forms of cannabis have negative physical and mental effects. Several regularly observed physical effects of cannabis are a substantial increase in the heart rate, bloodshot eyes, a dry mouth and throat, and increased appetite.

Use of cannabis may impair or reduce short-term memory and comprehension, alter sense of time, and reduce ability to perform tasks requiring concentration and coordination, such as driving a car. Research also shows that students do not retain knowledge when they are "high." Motivation and cognition may be altered, making the acquisition of

new information difficult. Marijuana can also produce paranoia and psychosis.

Because users often inhale the unfiltered smoke deeply and then hold it in their lungs as long as possible, marijuana is damaging to the lungs and pulmonary system. Marijuana smoke contains more cancer-causing agents than tobacco smoke.

Long-term users of cannabis may develop psychological dependence and require more of the drug to get the same effect. The drug can become the center of their lives.

Type	What is it called?	What does it look like?	How is it used?
Marijuana	Pot Grass Weed Reefer Dope Mary Jane Sinsemilla Acapulco Gold Thai Sticks	Dried parsley mixed with stems that may include seeds	Eaten Smoked
Tetrahydrocannabinol	THC	Soft gelatin capsules	Taken orally
Hashish	Hash	Brown or black cakes or balls	Eaten Smoked
Hashish Oil	Hash Oil	Concentrated syrupy liquid varying in color from clear to black	Smoked—mixed with tobacco