

OCTOBER 2022

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA MEDICAL STUDENT NEWSLETTER

HI UC,

In this newsletter we are looking at other drugs,
what they do and their effects:

- Type of drug
 - Inhalants (vaping)
 - Tobacco
 - Cannabis use
 - Methamphetamines
 - Hallucinogens
 - Steroids
 - Opiates/Narcotics
- CanTEST
- Myths and Facts
- Signs of a drug addiction
- Where to go to seek help



INHALANTS

Inhalants are household, medical or industrial products which can be inhaled giving off fumes that produce euphoric feelings or 'a high'.

Inhalants are nervous system depressants meaning they slow down the functioning of the brain. The effect mimics alcohol but is achieved much quicker as the chemicals are sent straight to the bloodstream via the lungs. Some examples include petrol, diesel, aerosol cans, nail polisher remover or methylated spirits.

A 'vape' is a device used to heat up a liquid to produce a vapour which is then inhaled. It is important to note that since October 2021, all nicotine 'vaping' products require a prescription across all Australian States and Territories. Although 'vaping' appears to be a healthier alternative to smoking, there are still many health risks involved. The vapour delivers nicotine, marijuana or other drugs into the lungs which are harmful for the brain and body. These e-liquids are dangerous and even those labelled 'nicotine-free' can contain nicotine and additives. 'Vaping' has been connected with cancer, chemicals that cause DNA damage and serious lung disease.

At UC, the sale, promotion, advertising or free distribution of tobacco products, vapourisers (e-cigarette) and similar devices is prohibited as the hazardous and harmful effects of their use are well-known. This measure ensures the safety of the UC community.

There are serious side effects to the use of inhalants including nausea, headaches, seizures, brain damage, abnormal heart rhythm or sudden death. If used on a regular and long term basis inhalants can cause damage to vital organs (stomach and kidneys), memory loss and persistent chest and heartburn.

The good news is, many symptoms may be reversed if use is stopped. However, it is important to note that some symptoms can result in permanent, irreparable damage.

To get more information about vaping and the serious health concerns linked to its use

WATCH this useful resource:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGJpGSCBzZ8

TOBACCO

Cigarette smoking is the most common form of tobacco use. Tobacco is also found in cigars and waterpipes. It contains over 70 known cancer-causing chemicals (like tar, carbon monoxide metals and radioactive compounds), harming nearly every organ and operating system in the human body.

Smoking is one of the leading causes of preventable illness and death. Even those who choose not to smoke can find themselves with the harmful effects of second-hand smoking (breathing in smoke from an external source), having a 20-30% higher risk of getting lung cancer.

The effects of smoking tobacco can include cancer in many parts of the body (lungs, mouth, throat, blood, kidneys, liver, stomach), heart disease, stroke, diabetes and internal ulcers.

UC is a smoke and tobacco free university and is not permitted on university-controlled premises or land. This ensures the safety of all students, staff and visitors that use the campus each day.

Quitting smoking can be challenging for a variety of reasons. The nicotine with tobacco triggers the release of dopamine within the body which essentially makes you feel good. If smoking becomes a regular part of your day, your brain gets used to having the nicotine around, and the cravings begin. If you stop smoking, your brain becomes irritable and as a result you may get anxious, have trouble concentrating and sleeping or just feel generally uncomfortable.

Although it may be hard to quit, the long term benefits far outweigh getting a short term fix. Your health (and those surrounding you) can be dramatically improved resulting in a higher life expectancy.

Quitting lowers the risk of 12 types of cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic inflammatory lung disease and coronary heart disease. It also has financial benefits in ceasing to spend money on cigarettes/tobacco as well as medical services/medications needed caused from smoking.

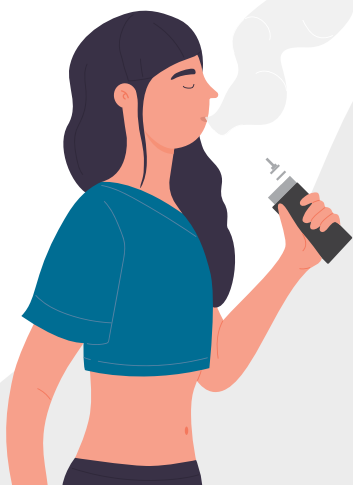
Quitting also means quitting the smell, bad breath, being able to be in smoke free areas and safely be amongst others.



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HOW TO QUIT

1. **Why quit smoking?** - Understand why you want to quit and learn about the benefits of quitting. This will be a useful tool and motivator.
2. **What quitting feels like** - When you quit, you will have withdrawal symptoms. They can last for a few days or a few weeks, every person is different. It's important to know that they are temporary.
3. **Know your triggers** - Keep a quit diary to learn what are the things that make you smoke/want to smoke
4. **Quitting methods** - Find out different methods that could work for you and are achievable. You may want to go cold turkey, cut down gradually or engage in nicotine replacement therapy.
5. **Make a quit plan** - Finding your own strategy for quitting is important. Every person is different.
6. **Coping with quitting and staying smoke-free** - Understand what support is available to you. The **UC Medical and Counselling Centre** doctors and psychologists can help with quitting smoking. Phone: **6201 2351**. Visit us in Building 1 at the University of Canberra campus or book an appointment online via HotDoc.

VISIT www.health.gov.au/health-topics/smoking-and-tobacco/how-to-quit-smoking for a more in-depth guide to these steps on how to quit smoking.

WATCH this interactive guide about what the single best thing you can do to quit smoking: www.youtube.com/watch?v=z16vhtjWKLO



CANNABIS

Cannabis is the most common drug of choice in Australia and comes in multiple forms. The National Drug Strategy Household Survey estimates that people aged 18-24 continue to be the most likely group to use cannabis.

Common forms of cannabis include:

- Marijuana (also called weed, pot and grass) is made from the cannabis plant's dried leaves and flowers, smoked in a joint or bong.
- Hashish is the dried resin from the plant, usually mixed with tobacco, which is smoked or added to foods like cookies or brownies
- Hash oil is a liquid added to the tip of a joint or cigarette
- Concentrates are cannabis extracts which are usually dissolved into butane hash oil

In most states and territories in Australia, it is illegal to use, possess, cultivate or sell cannabis in Australia. However, in the ACT, the laws governing cannabis possession, cultivation and use have changed. It is still an offense to smoke and use cannabis in public places, expose and store cannabis where children frequent and grow plants that can be accessed or sold to others. VISIT www.act.gov.au/cannabis/home for more information regarding cannabis within the ACT.

Cannabis can affect people differently depending on how much is taken, how strong it is, a person's size, weight and height, whether the person is used to taking it and whether the person is a polydrug user. The short term effects of cannabis usage may include a fast heart rate, red or dry eyes, nausea, anxiety or paranoia and memory impairment. Long term effects are also crucial to be aware of. They include altered brain development, cognitive impairment, mental health conditions, and severe nausea and vomiting.

METHAMPHETAMINES

Methamphetamines like crystal meth (ice), speed and meth are dangerous and highly addictive substances. They are used illegally as stimulants, directly affecting the body's central nervous system.

They cause high levels of dopamine (a brain chemical associated with pleasure and reward) to be released into the body. This gives reason as to why they become so addictive as the body feels like it is being rewarded each time they are used. Over longer periods of time, this pattern has been shown to be toxic to the brain's ability to produce and regulate dopamine levels, which can lead to very low moods.

Other effects of methamphetamines involve hyperactivity, twitching or jerky movements, dilated pupils, paranoia, reduced appetite and mood swings. An overdose of methamphetamines can lead to heart palpitations, breathing problems, seizures, cardiac arrest and death. Long term use impacts not only on the person's health but their entire life. Repeated methamphetamines use can develop physical problems such as extreme weight loss, poor sleep, dental problems and are more prone to other illnesses.

Continued ...



Users may look much older than they actually are, find everyday activities less enjoyable, have rapid mood swings and become depressed and stressed very easily. They are more susceptible to social, work, financial and relationship problems.

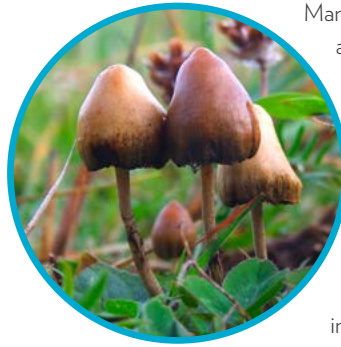
TED TALK: Lesson Learned from Meth
www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7VFwtsbXPU

HALLUCINOGENS

Hallucinogens are illegal substances that alter a person's perception of reality. They are synthetically manufactured LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), PCP (phencyclidine, or 'angel dust') and ketamine or derived from plants (like the commonly known 'magic mushrooms').

Hallucinogens are often swallowed, smoked or inhaled and they target specific centers of the brain to alter its understanding of sensory input, making a person see, feel and hear things that are not real.

The effects of hallucinogens depend on the type of drug, its strength, the functioning of the person taking them and their state of mind.



OTHER PERFORMANCE ENHANCERS

Many students use drugs to help them study, concentrate and relax. These include nootropics such as modafinil, methylphenidate (ADHD medication) and certain B vitamins.

The effects of nootropics include nausea, dizziness, headaches, anxiety, dilated pupils, elevated blood pressure, paranoia and hostility.

WATCH this video to gain a deeper understanding into what happens to your body when you take steroids:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mM55SZvYWLY

OPIATES/NARCOTICS

Opioids like heroin (dope), oxycodone, codeine and opium, act on opioid receptors in the brain, slowing down messages between the brain and body. While they can effectively relieve pain, opioids carry some risks and can be highly addictive.

Some effects of opioids include drowsiness, clumsiness, slowed heart rate and breathing, confusion, slurred speech and loss of consciousness.

COMMON EFFECTS

- hallucinations of sight, sound, taste and touch
- a blurring of the senses, such as sounds being 'felt' or colours being 'heard'
- feeling detached from the body
- distortions of time, direction and distance
- relaxation
- accelerated/irregular heart rate
- dilated pupils
- nausea and loss of appetite.
- sweating, chills or vomiting



STEROIDS

There are two main types of steroids:

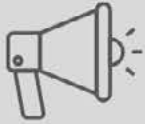
- **Corticosteroids** - used to stop inflammation in the body and treat a variety of medical conditions such as arthritis and multiple sclerosis
- **Anabolic steroids** - synthetic (man-made) versions of testosterone, used to increase muscle mass or strength, which increases athlete performance. Although they can be prescribed for medical purposes, increasing performance is not one of them.

The effects of steroids vary from person to person and the frequency of use. Common effects include liver abnormalities/tumors, high blood pressure, circulation issues, heart problems, infection/disease (HIV, Hepatitis) from injecting steroids and inhibited growth and development.



CanTEST Tested **58** samples in it's first month.

HEALTH AND DRUG CHECKING SERVICE



Community News

CanTEST's first month went well with good community uptake.

People who attended reported feeling safe and respected, and receiving good, clear information.

CanTEST staff provided 70 health and AOD brief interventions to people who attended and 18 samples were discarded.

Support CanTEST by spreading the word and encouraging people to have their drugs tested.



Ketamine

was expected in 7 samples and detected in 5.

Purities ranged from 39 - 79%.

When Ketamine wasn't found, 1 sample contained lignocaine & cocaine. Another sample contained the ketamine derivative **fluorexetamine**.

Very little is known about the effects or risks associated with fluorexetamine use. Ketamine users in the ACT are encouraged to have their ketamine checked at CanTEST.



MDMA

was expected in 19 samples and detected in 13.

Samples tested & their purity ranges consisted of:
4/7 capsules contained 23 - 64%
3/5 powders contained 19 - 62%
3/4 pills contained 9 - 21%
3/3 crystalline contained 6 - 73%

Where MDMA wasn't found, a range of other substances were detected **including caffeine & bk-2C-B**.

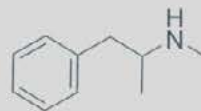


Heroin

was expected in 6 samples and detected in all 6.

Purities ranged from 31 - 63%.

To date, no fentanyl have been identified in any samples tested.



Methamphetamine

was expected in 4 samples and detected in 3 powders.

Purities ranged from 42 - 83%.

One white crystalline sample contained no methamphetamine and was identified as sugar.

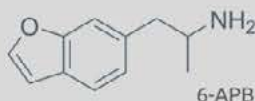


Cocaine

was expected in 5 samples and detected in 3.

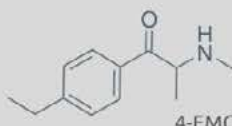
Purity levels were <27%.

One sample which contained no cocaine, was found to contain **dimethyl sulfone**.



6-APB

the MDA derivative, 6-APB, was expected in 2 samples but was actually identified as **4-ethylmethcathinone** (4-EMC) in both.



4-EMC



Other Findings

A range of other expected drugs were detected, including the psychedelic 2C-B, mexedrone and **phenibut**.

In two test cases, unknown samples were presented with lactose and paracetamol identified.

15/15 samples analysed for the presence of fentanyl returned a negative result.

Thursday 10am - 1pm
Friday 6pm - 9pm

City Community Health Centre,
1 Moore Street, Canberra City

www.directionshealth.com/CanTEST

PILL TESTING
ACT

Directions
Health Services

cahma
Canberra Alliance for Home Medication & Recovery

MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH 1

Vaping is not addictive

FACT

There is now evidence that shows vaping can become an addiction and users can become dependent. This is especially true when nicotine is in the vaping liquid.

MYTH 2

Vapes only produce water vapour

FACT

Vaping produces an aerosol that contains many harmful chemicals. These chemicals are linked to negative health effects such as lung damage.

MYTH 3

Occasional smoking isn't harmful

FACT

There is no safe limit when it comes to smoking cigarettes or other tobacco products. Every time you smoke you are doing damage to your body. This damage can put you at a higher risk for heart attacks and strokes.

MYTH 4

Smoking is relaxing and can help you deal with stress

FACT

Smoking does not help you relax. It raises your blood pressure and heart rate. The feeling of "relaxation" is because you have satisfied a nicotine craving.

MYTH 5

Marijuana is natural, therefore not harmful

FACT

Many studies show marijuana use can have lasting effects on the developing teen brain especially when used at a young age. Lots of things are natural but they are still poisonous.

MYTH 6

No one has ever died on hallucinogens

FACT

Hallucinogens cause intense disorientation, confusion and hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't really there), which can increase the risk of injury or accidental death. People who are having a 'bad trip' can sometimes become aggressive towards themselves or other people.

MYTH 7

Because it's a prescription medication, I won't become addicted

FACT

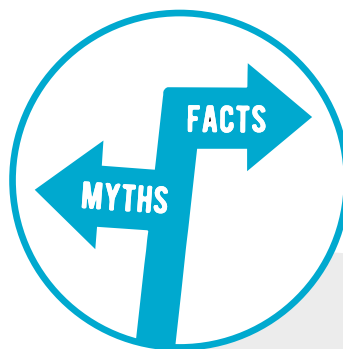
Prescription opioids are just as addictive as heroin. You can become dependent in as few as five days. About 80 percent of people who use heroin first misused prescription opioids.

MYTH 8

Steroids build muscle without working out

FACT

One of the biggest problems in today's society is that people are always looking for the quick fix. This is not the case with steroid use and still requires intense, hard training. If you aren't satisfied with yourself and want to make a change, the only way is to work at it in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.



SIGNS OF A DRUG ADDICTION

There are some common signs of a drug addiction to be aware of including:

- Inability to control the use of the drug
- It becomes increasingly difficult to live without the drug
- More of the substance is needed to get the same effect (tolerance)
- Intense and all-consuming urges to have the drug
- Spending large amounts on the drug
- Experiencing withdrawals after not taking the drug
- Keep taking the drug even after it is no longer needed
- Persistent use of the drug even after made aware of the consequences/damages
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Stealing/borrowing money for drugs
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Appearance change
- Thoughts are consumed by the drug/when the next time the drug will be taken
- Loss of relationships/social connections.

WHERE TO GO TO SEEK HELP

The first step is having a conversation about what you are using and how. It is important to gain more information and understand ourselves better so that we can make better choices around drugs.

It is important if you or someone you know is experiencing drug addiction or using substances to seek help in the effort to manage the problems. This ensures the health and safety of you and those surrounding you, minimising the harmful impacts of these drugs.

THE UC MEDICAL AND COUNSELLING CENTRE (book online or call reception on 6201 2351) www.canberra.edu.au/on-campus/health-and-support/medical-counselling

FAMILY DRUG SUPPORT: designed to assist family members of those with a drug addiction. Phone 1300 368 186 or visit www.fds.org.au

ALTHEA WELLNESS CENTRE: provides specialist psychologist, GP, and nursing care for those impacted by alcohol or drugs. Call the Woden office on (02) 6132 4800 or visit directionshealth.com

STIMULANT TREATMENT LINE: Call 9361 8088 or 1800 101 188 (outside Sydney)

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS AUSTRALIA: Call 1300 652 820 or visit na.org.au



Keep an eye out for our next issue.

On behalf of the UC Medical & Counselling Centre, stay safe everyone!