

Drug Facts & Information

Nitrous Oxide

Also called: Balloons, Nos, Whippits, Laughing Gas, Hippie Crack, Chargers, Noz.
A colourless gas that people inhale, usually via a balloon.

This is a psychoactive drug and is covered by the 2016 Psychoactive Substances Act, which means it's illegal to give away or sell.

What does it look like?

Most commonly found in pressurised metal canisters. You may have seen these canisters lying around in streets, outside bars and nightclubs.

How is it taken?

Nitrous oxide is inhaled. People open the canister, transfer the gas into a container (usually a balloon), then inhale from the balloon. Inhaling directly from the canister is very dangerous - the gas is under such high pressure that it can cause a spasm of the throat muscle and stop a person breathing.



How does it make you feel?

It slows down your brain and your body's responses, and the effects of the drug varies depending on how much has been inhaled. It can cause:

- Feelings of euphoria, relaxation and calmness
- Fits of giggles and laughter – hence the nickname 'laughing gas'
- Sound distortions and hallucinations – when you see or hear things that aren't there

It can also:

- Give you a severe headache
- Cause dizziness
- Stop you thinking straight
- Cause short-lived but intense feelings of paranoia

Can you get addicted to Nitrous Oxide?

It may be possible to become psychologically dependent on Nitrous Oxide, meaning that users develop an increased desire to keep using it despite the harm it may cause, but the evidence on this is limited.

Physical health risks

It is very dangerous to inhale nitrous oxide directly from the canister, and doing it in an enclosed space is also very dangerous. If you take too much you risk falling unconscious and/or suffocating from the lack of oxygen. People have died this way.

Other risks include:

- Dizziness/ fainting, which might make you act carelessly or dangerously. It can be hard to judge the amount to use safely.
- Heavy regular use of nitrous oxide can lead to a deficiency of vitamin B12 and to a form of anaemia. Severe B12 deficiency can lead to serious nerve damage, causing tingling and numbness in the fingers and toes. This can be very painful and make walking difficult.
- Regular use can stop you forming white blood cells properly.

Cocaine

Also called: Blow, Coke, Crack, Charlie, White, Wash, Toot, Flake, Stones, Sniff, Snow, Rocks, Percy, Pebbles, Freebase, Ching, Chang, C. **A powerful stimulant that's snorted as a powder (coke) or smoked from small rocks (crack).**

What does it look, taste and smell like?

There are three types of cocaine: coke, crack and freebase. Coke looks like a fine white powder. Crack looks like small lumps or rocks. Freebase looks like a crystallised powder. Cocaine powder has a bitter 'chemical' taste and smell, while crack cocaine can smell like burnt plastic or rubber



How is it taken?

The most common way of taking cocaine is to snort it – people crush it into a fine powder, divide it into lines and snort it through the nose.

Crack or freebase can be smoked through a glass pipe, tube, plastic bottle or in foil, but this is less common. Powdered coke and crack can be prepared to make a solution for injecting, which is much more dangerous than snorting or smoking cocaine.

How does it make you feel?

Taking cocaine can make people feel: happy, excited, wide awake, confident, on top of their game, chattier, more animated, more confident.

It can also: make your heart beat faster, raise your body temperature, stop you feeling hungry, make you feel sick, make you need to poo, make you anxious and panicky, make you paranoid, make you so confident that you do things you wouldn't normally do (which might be risky), make you overconfident, arrogant, agitated, restless or edgy.

Physical health risks

- Cocaine is risky for anyone with high blood pressure or a heart condition, but even healthy young people can have a fit or a heart attack after taking too much.
- The risk of overdose increases if you mix cocaine with other drugs or alcohol.
- Over time, snorting cocaine damages the cartilage in your nose that separates your nostrils. Heavy users can lose this cartilage.
- Regularly smoking crack can cause breathing problems and chest pains.
- Injecting damages veins and cause ulcers and gangrene. Sharing needles can spread HIV and hepatitis infections. It's easier to overdose from injecting cocaine.

Is it dangerous to mix with other drugs?

Mixing drugs is always risky but some mixtures are more dangerous than others. Once Cocaine and Alcohol mix together in the body they produce a toxic chemical called Cocaethylene. Cocaethylene stays in the body much longer than cocaine or alcohol alone, and this increases the damage done to the heart and liver.

Mental health risks

Regular use of cocaine can make people feel: depressed, run-down, anxious, paranoid.

Cocaine can bring previous mental health problems to the surface too, and if a relative has had mental health problems, there might be an increased risk for you.

Addiction and social risks

Cocaine is very addictive. Regular use changes the way the brain releases dopamine, a brain chemical that makes you feel happy.

Cocaine is mostly known for causing psychological dependence (addiction), but users can sometimes continue to use cocaine just to overcome the negative after effects of using. This can lead to a binge pattern of use and increase the risk of dependence.

Frequent users find they begin to crave more – so it can become an expensive habit to keep up with.

Ecstasy/MDMA

Also called: Dizzle, Xtc, Superman, Rolexs, Pink Superman, Pills, Mitsubishis, MDMA, Mandy, EDolphins, Crystal, Cowies, Brownies, Molly, Beans, MD. A popular club drug that's sold in pills (ecstasy) or as a powder (MDMA).

What does it look like?

Ecstasy comes in pill or powder form. When it's a powder it's called by its chemical name, MDMA. Ecstasy pills can be white or coloured and can be pressed into any shape. Some pills have designs stamped into them. Ecstasy powder looks like white/grey crystals and is called MDMA, Mandy or MD.



What does it taste/ smell like?

Ecstasy pills are usually swallowed and MDMA is usually rubbed (dabbed) into the user's gums. They both taste bitter and unpleasant.

How does it make you feel?

Most people feel: very happy, energised and alert, 'loved up' – users often feel love and affection for the people they're with and the strangers around them. People often feel more in tune with their surroundings (music is more intense).

Some users have reported feelings of: anxiety, panic attacks, confused episodes, paranoia and even psychosis.

How does it make people behave?

People often feel chatty and uninhibited on ecstasy, which makes them open up and talk about things they might not do normally.

Physical side effects

These can include: dilated pupils, tingling sensations, tightening or moving of the jaw muscles (gurning), raised body temperature, a faster heartbeat and nausea.

Physical health risks

- Ecstasy has been linked to liver, kidney and heart problems.
- Some users get colds/ sore throats more often.
- Anyone with a heart condition, blood pressure problems, epilepsy or asthma can have a very dangerous reaction to the drug.
- Ecstasy affects the body's temperature control. Dancing for long periods in a hot atmosphere increases the chances of overheating and dehydration.
- Ecstasy can cause the body to release a hormone which stops it making urine. If you drink too quickly you might affect your body's salt balance, which can be as deadly as not drinking enough water.

How do people take it?

Ecstasy pills are usually swallowed, although some people crush them up and snort them. The amount of MDMA in them varies and some contain other, more dangerous drugs. They can be cut with amphetamines (like speed), caffeine and other substances. Some are cut with stimulants that are slower to kick in and so users have taken more of the pill (or pills) and then overdosed.

You should never take a whole pill in one go, even if you've taken ecstasy before.

People usually take MDMA powder by dabbing it onto their gums or by swallowing it wrapped in a cigarette paper ('bombing').

When taking Ecstasy pills or MDMA powder, drinking too much (including water) can be dangerous. Users should sip no more than a pint of water or non-alcoholic drink every hour.

Mental health risks

Evidence suggests that long-term users can suffer from memory problems and may develop depression and anxiety.

Can you get addicted?

It's possible to build up tolerance to Ecstasy, which means people need to take more of the drug to get the same buzz. You may also develop a psychological dependence, which is a strong desire to keep on using even if you think your use is having harmful consequences