National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

Drugs That People Misuse

National Institute on Drug Abuse
The Science of Drug Abuse & Addiction

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Table of Contents

- Drugs That People Misuse
  - Alcohol Facts
  - Bath Salts Facts
  - Cocaine (Coke, Crack) Facts
  - E-Cigarette Facts
  - Heroin (Smack, Junk) Facts
  - Marijuana (Weed, Pot) Facts
  - MDMA (Ecstasy, Molly) Facts
  - Meth (Crank, Ice) Facts
  - Pain Medicine (Oxy, Vike) Facts
  - Spice (K2) Facts
  - Vaping, Nicotine and Tobacco Facts
  - Other Drugs People Use and Misuse

Drugs That People Misuse

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A drug is a chemical substance that can change how your body and mind work. Drugs that can be dangerous are ones that people use to get high and change the way they feel. They can be drugs like marijuana, cocaine, or heroin. Or they may be drugs legally sold to adults everywhere, like alcohol and tobacco.

Medicines can also be misused when people take them to get high instead of the way their doctor advises. People can even misuse cough or cold medicines from the store if they ignore the directions and take too much at one time.

People use drugs for many reasons:

- **They want to feel good.** Taking a drug can feel really good for a short time. That's why people keep taking them—to have those good feelings again and again. But even though someone can take more and more of a drug, the good feelings don't last. Soon the person is taking the drug just to keep from feeling bad.
- **They want to stop feeling bad.** Some people who feel very worried, afraid, or sad use drugs to try to stop feeling so awful. This doesn't really help their problems and can lead to addiction, which can make them feel much worse.
- **They want to do well in school or at work.** Some people who want to get good grades, get a better job, or earn more money might think drugs will give them more energy, keep them awake, or make them think faster. But it usually doesn't work. It may put their health at risk and may lead to addiction.

Alcohol Facts

Drinks like beer, malt liquor, wine, and hard liquor contain alcohol. Alcohol is the ingredient that gets you drunk.

Hard liquor—such as whiskey, rum, or gin—has more alcohol in it than beer, malt liquor, or wine.

These drink sizes have about the same amount of alcohol in them:

- 12 ounces of regular beer
- 8-9 ounces of malt liquor
- 5 ounces of wine
- 1 ½ ounces of hard liquor

Being drunk can make a person feel very silly, angry, or sad for no reason. It can make it hard to walk in a straight line, talk clearly, or drive.

Photo by: The National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Some slang names for alcohol are:

- Booze
- Juice
- Hooch
- Sauce

NEXT: Signs of Alcohol Misuse

Signs of Alcohol Misuse

Photo by ©istock.com/KatarzynaBialasiewicz

Drinking alcohol is not necessarily a problem, but drinking too much can cause bad things to happen. People who drink too much alcohol might forget things that happened when they were drunk. This is called a blackout.

People drunk on alcohol often:

- laugh and talk loudly
- feel dizzy
- have blurry vision
- have trouble staying on their feet and sway when they walk
- slur words when they talk
- feel sleepy and relaxed
- pass out
- throw up
- get violent

Getting drunk can lead you to do or say things that you regret later on. It also makes you more likely to get into a car crash and get hurt.

After drinking a lot, people get a headache and feel sick. This is called a hangover.

People who misuse alcohol, or people who are addicted, start having to drink more and more to get drunk. They might have a drink in the morning to calm down or stop a hangover. They might drink alone, and they might keep it a secret.

They might forget things that happened when they were drunk. This is

called a blackout.

NEXT: Effects of Alcohol on Brains and Bodies

Effects of Alcohol on Brains and Bodies

Photo by ©istock.com/aijohn784

Being drunk makes you more likely to get hurt or killed. Alcohol is involved in many deadly car crashes.

These are just some of the problems alcohol can cause:

Diseases

Heavy drinking over the years can raise your risk for stroke (a “brain attack”), cancer, liver disease, and other illnesses.

People can forget to use condoms when they're drunk. They can then have unsafe sex and get HIV/AIDS or hepatitis (a liver disease).

Problems with Your Baby

If a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, it can cause brain damage, which can lead to other health problems in the baby.

Accidents or Death

Being drunk makes you more likely to get hurt or killed. Alcohol is involved in:

- 60 percent of drownings, murders, and deadly burns
- 50 percent of severe injuries and sexual attacks
- 40 percent of deadly driving crashes, deadly falls, and suicides

Brain Damage

Heavy drinking over the years can permanently hurt your brain cells. This can make it hard to walk, remember, or learn new things.

Alcohol Poisoning

You can die from drinking a lot of alcohol at one time, called alcohol poisoning. It can especially happen to young people who are not used to drinking.

Signs of alcohol poisoning:

- confusion
- throwing up
- slowed breathing
- cold, blue skin
- coma (you can't wake them up)
- seizures (when your body starts twitching and jerking uncontrollably)

If someone you know has any of these signs, you should call 911 right away.

Addiction

You can get addicted to alcohol just like other drugs. Over time, alcohol can change the way your brain works. If you stop drinking alcohol, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

People who are trying to quit drinking might:

- feel nervous and sad
- shake
- sweat
- have trouble sleeping

They will feel a very strong need to drink alcohol.

Fortunately, there are medicines and other treatments that can help someone recover from alcohol addiction.

Remember that even if you get treatment, it can be hard to stop drinking. People who stopped using alcohol can still feel strong cravings to have a drink, sometimes even years later. This is normal. This is also why it's important to stay in treatment for as long as your doctor suggests, and

learn to enjoy friendships and activities that do not center on drinking.

Bath Salts Facts

Photo by DEA

Bath salts are illegal drugs that get people high. People make them with chemicals like ones found in the khat plant, which grows in many parts of the world. Illegal bath salts are not related to products like Epsom salts that people use for bathing.

Bath salts are a white or brown crystal powder. They are sold in small packages with a warning that says you are not supposed to eat them ("not for human consumption"). Sellers use this message to confuse the police, and to hide the fact they are drugs.

People usually swallow, snort, smoke, or use a needle to inject (shoot up) bath salts.

Some names of bath salt products are:

- Flakka
- Cosmic Blast
- Ivory Wave
- Vanilla Sky
- White Lightning

NEXT: Signs of Bath Salt Use

Signs of Bath Salt Use

The high that people can have when taking these drugs is like having a lot of energy. You might feel very friendly toward other people and talk a lot. But bath salts can also make you dizzy, afraid, and violent. You might see, feel, or hear things that you think are there when they're really not. You can start to think about ending your life.

Some people end up in the emergency room or even die after taking bath salts. The risk is highest when people snort or inject the drug.

NEXT: Effects of Bath Salts on Brains and Bodies

Effects of Bath Salts on Brains and Bodies

Photo by ©iStock.com/knape

Bath salts can make you feel sick and start to sweat.

These are just some of the problems bath salts can cause:

You Feel Sick

Bath salts can cause nosebleeds and make you sweat. They can also make you lose sleep and throw up. They can also make you very thirsty.

You Don't Act Like Yourself

Some people who take bath salts can become extremely annoyed and violent.

Muscle Breakdown and Kidney Failure

Bath salts can make your muscles weaker. They can also make your kidneys stop working, affecting how you go to the bathroom.

Heart Attack

Bath salts can cause your heart to beat faster and your blood pressure to go up. This can give you a heart attack, which could lead to death.

HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis

Sharing used needles to inject bath salts can give you HIV/AIDS or hepatitis (a liver disease).

Overdose

An overdose happens when a person uses enough of a drug to have a very bad reaction or death. People overdose on bath salts because they take too much of the drug. You can die from a bath salts overdose.

Addiction

You can get addicted to bath salts. Over time, it can change the way your brain works. If you suddenly stop using bath salts, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

When the high goes away or if you are trying to quit, you might:

- feel depressed or anxious
- get the shakes
- have problems sleeping
- have mental problems, like believing people are out to get you
- have strong cravings to use bath salts to feel good again

Fortunately, counseling can help someone with a bath salts addiction.

Even if you get treatment, it can be hard to stay off the drug. People who stopped using bath salts can still feel strong cravings for the drug, sometimes even years later. It is best to never start using them.

Cocaine (Coke, Crack) Facts

Photo by ©istock.com/Kondor

Cocaine is a white powder. People can snort it up the nose. They can also mix it with water and inject (shoot up) it into their arm with a needle. Cocaine can also be made into small white rocks, called Crack. It's called Crack because when the rocks are heated, they make a cracking sound. Crack is smoked in a small glass pipe.

Cocaine can make you feel full of energy and in control of your world. But it can also make you restless, scared, or angry.

Some slang names for cocaine are:

- Coke
- Coca
- Snow
- Flake
- Blow

NEXT: Signs of Cocaine Use

Signs of Cocaine Use

Photo by ©istock.com/TheMalni

Cocaine speeds up your whole body. Your heart beats fast. You talk, move, and think fast. Your body feels too hot. You might shake and twitch. You don't sleep or eat much.

Cocaine can make you feel happy and excited. But then your mood can change. You can become angry, nervous, and afraid that someone's out to get you. You might do things that make no sense.

After the high of the cocaine wears off, you can "crash" and feel tired and sad for days. You also get a strong craving to take the drug again to try to feel better.

People who snort cocaine up the nose can get nosebleeds. You can even lose your sense of smell. Your nose may be runny all the time, like you always have a cold.

People who inject cocaine will have marks where the needle went in, usually on their arms.

NEXT: Effects of Cocaine on Brains and Bodies

Effects of Cocaine on Brains and Bodies

These are just some of the problems cocaine can cause:

Sickness

Cocaine can cause stomach pain and headaches. It can make you shake, throw up, or pass out.

No Appetite

Cocaine can make you not want to eat. Over time, you might lose a lot of weight and get sick.

Heart Attack and Stroke

Cocaine raises your blood pressure and makes your heart beat faster. This can hurt your heart. It can lead to a heart attack or stroke (a “brain attack”). Some people die because of it.

HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis

People who inject drugs like cocaine can get HIV/AIDS or hepatitis (a liver disease) if they share used needles. People also get these diseases by having unsafe sex. They may forget to use condoms because they're high on the drug.

Overdose

An overdose happens when a person uses enough of a drug to have a very bad reaction or death. A cocaine overdose can cause a heart attack or stroke, and you can die. If someone you know has any of these signs, you should call 911 right away.

Signs of a cocaine overdose are:

- throwing up
- chest pain
- fast heartbeat
- shaking

- feeling hot
- panic
- hallucinations (seeing things that aren’t there)

Addiction

It is easy to lose control over cocaine use and become addicted. Over time, it can change the way your brain works. If you stop taking the medicine, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

People addicted to cocaine might take bigger doses or take it more often to get high. A cocaine high usually doesn't last very long. So people take it again and again to try to keep feeling good.

People who are trying to quit taking cocaine might:

- act nervous and restless
- feel very sad and tired
- have bad dreams
- be suspicious of people and things around them

They will feel a strong need to take the drug.

Fortunately, counseling can help someone with cocaine addiction.

If you get treatment, it can be hard to stay off the drug. People who stopped using cocaine can still feel strong cravings for the drug, sometimes even years later.

E-Cigarette Facts

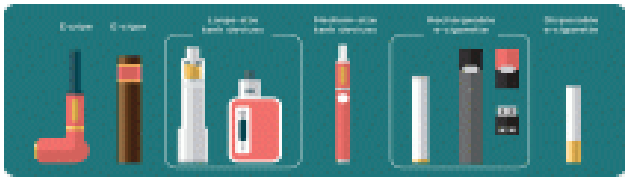


Photo by CDC

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes or e-vaporizers) are battery-operated devices that people use to inhale nicotine or flavorings into the lungs. When you puff on it, the e-cigarette makes vapor from the liquid in the cartridge. You then inhale this vapor. People call this "vaping."

Some slang names for e-cigarettes are:

- e-cigs
- vapes
- vape pipes
- vape pens

NEXT: Signs of E-Cigarette Use

Signs of E-Cigarette Use

The nicotine in e-cigarettes can make you feel good. It can also raise your blood pressure. Your heart might beat faster. You might breathe faster. And it can make you not want to eat.

E-cigarettes don’t smell like the smoke from cigarettes and might not have an odor. But the cartridges might have flavored liquid that can smell like fruit, mint, or candy. If you smell these scents and don’t see any of these items around, it could be an e-cigarette.

Some e-cigarettes look like everyday items, like pens or USB drives. If you see someone holding these items a lot, you can take a closer look to see if they are actually e-cigarettes.

One important part of an e-cigarette is called the atomizer. This turns the liquid in the product into a vapor. After a while, these burn out. If you find an atomizer in the garbage, someone in your house might be using e-cigarettes.

NEXT: Effects of E-Cigarettes on Brains and Bodies

Effects of E-Cigarettes on Brains and Bodies

Inhaling Chemicals

Some people think that because e-cigarettes don't use tobacco, they are not bad for you. But the vapor that goes into e-cigarettes and vaporizers can have chemicals that might hurt you. These chemicals can be very dangerous when they are inhaled. Researchers are studying the effects of these chemicals.

Health Problems for Babies

If a pregnant woman uses e-cigarettes that contain nicotine, her baby might be born too early or too small. Nicotine can cause health problems for the baby.

Health Problems for Teens

The teen years are important for brain growth. Your brain grows until you're about 25 years old. Therefore, using nicotine products in any form, including e-cigarettes, can change the way the brain grows.

Nicotine Poisoning

Nicotine poisoning often happens when young children chew nicotine gum or patches that people use to quit. Or they might swallow e-cigarette liquid that contains nicotine.

Signs of a nicotine poisoning are:

- having trouble breathing
- throwing up
- fainting
- headache
- heart beating really fast or really slowly

If a child has any of these signs after eating or drinking nicotine, you should call 911 right away.

Addiction

You can become addicted to the nicotine in e-cigarettes just like other drugs. When you smoke e-cigarettes, the nicotine quickly gives you a small rush of pleasure and energy. But it soon goes away. This makes you want to use e-cigarettes again and again throughout the day.

Over time, nicotine can change the way your brain works. If you stop using it, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

People who are trying to stop nicotine use might:

- be cranky
- have problems paying attention
- have trouble sleeping
- eat more
- crave nicotine

Photo by ©Shutterstock.com/Pedro Bento

Fortunately, there are many ways to quit using e-cigarettes. Some examples are:

- counseling
- nicotine replacement therapy, like chewing gum and patches
- medicines

Some people think that using e-cigarettes will help them quit smoking regular cigarettes, but there is no proof that e-cigarettes help people stop smoking. Also, studies have shown that teens who use e-cigarettes are likely to start smoking cigarettes in the future.

The phone number 1-800-QUIT-NOW will connect you with people that can help you quit.

Heroin (Smack, Junk) Facts

Photo by ©istock.com/Bestfotostudio

Heroin is a white or brown powder or a black, sticky goo. People can mix heroin with water and inject it (shoot up) with a needle. They can also smoke it or snort it up the nose. Heroin is a type of opioid, which means it is similar to the pain medicines that come from the poppy plant.

Heroin can cause a rush of good feelings just after it's taken. Some people throw up or feel itchy after taking it. Some people may want to sleep and their heart rate and breathing can slow down. When the drug wears off, they may feel a strong urge to take more.

Some slang names for heroin are:

- Smack
- Junk
- H
- Black tar
- Horse

NEXT: Signs of Heroin Use

Signs of Heroin Use

Heroin can give you a feeling of comfort and happiness. It can also make you feel like the world has slowed down. People on heroin may think slowly and might move slowly.

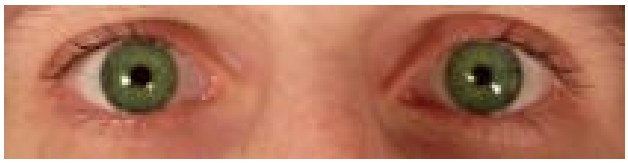


Photo by Wikimedia Commons/Myosis

Heroin can make people feel sleepy, like they're in a dream.

Heroin makes the pupils in a person's eyes get very small. A pupil is the black circle in the center of each eye.

People who inject (shoot up) heroin may have marks on the skin where the needle went in.

When heroin wears off, people might:

- have pain in muscles and bones
- get chills
- throw up
- be unable to sleep
- feel nervous
- feel itchy

NEXT: Effects of Heroin on Brains and Bodies

Effects of Heroin on Brains and Bodies

Photo by ©istock.com/KatarzynaBialasiewicz

Heroin can make you throw up.

These are just some of the problems heroin can cause:

Sickness and Itchiness

Heroin can make you throw up and feel very itchy.

Stopped Breathing

Heroin can slow or stop your breathing. It can kill you.

HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis

Sharing used needles to shoot up heroin can give you HIV/AIDS or hepatitis (a liver disease). People can also get these diseases by having unsafe sex. They may forget to use condoms because they're high on the drug.

Overdose

An overdose happens when a person uses enough of a drug to have a very bad reaction or death. Many people die from heroin overdoses because it can slow a person’s breathing, even stopping it. People overdose on heroin because they can't tell how strong it is until they take it. Signs of a heroin overdose are:

- slow breathing
- won’t wake up
- slow or stopped heartbeat
- blue lips and fingernails
- cold, damp skin
- shaking
- unable to speak

If someone you know has any of these signs, you should call 911 right away. Say that the person isn't responding or breathing.

Overdose Treatment

Naloxone is a medicine that can quickly stop an opioid overdose. If someone overdoses on pain medicine, it can save their life.

Addiction

Prescription opioid pain medicines like Oxycontin and Vicodin have effects similar to heroin. Research suggests that misuse of these medicines may open the door to heroin use.

It can be very easy to become addicted to heroin. Over time, heroin can change the way your brain works. If you stop using heroin, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

You can become addicted to heroin if you inject it, snort it, or smoke it. It doesn’t make a difference. People who get addicted to heroin need to keep taking it to feel normal. Over time, they might need to take more and more of it to get the same high. They might have pain in their muscles and bones, get chills, throw up, and feel nervous. They will feel a very strong need to take the drug to feel better.

Fortunately, there are medicines that can help someone with heroin addiction. Counseling can also help.

Remember that even if you get treatment, it can be hard to stay away from heroin. Your body might crave it. These cravings can still happen years later. It may take many tries to stop using heroin. This is why it’s important to stay in treatment for as long as your doctor suggests.

Marijuana (Weed, Pot) Facts

Photo by ©iStock.com/sale123

Marijuana is a mix of dried, shredded leaves and flowers from the marijuana plant. It is often green, brown, or gray.

There are many ways to use marijuana. People can:

- roll marijuana up and smoke it like a cigarette (called a joint) or a cigar (called a blunt)
- smoke marijuana in a pipe
- mix it in food and eat it or brew it as a tea
- smoke oils from the marijuana plant (this is called “dabbing”)
- use electronic vaporizers (“vape pens”) to “vape”
- marijuana oil

Dabbing and vaping are on the rise.

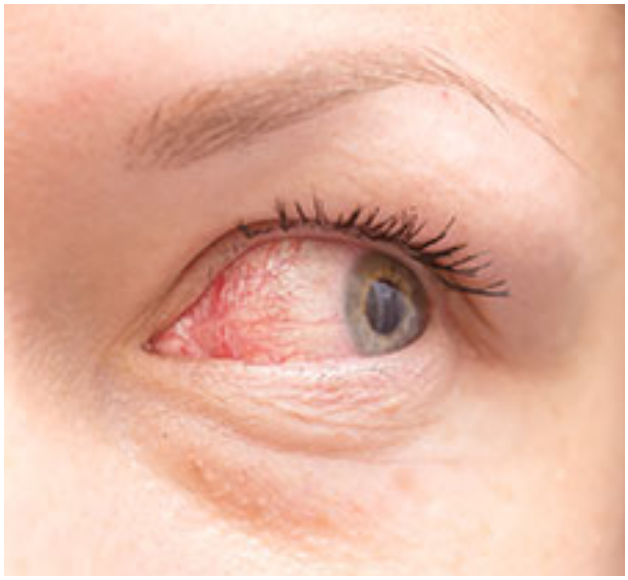
Marijuana can make you feel silly, relaxed, sleepy, and happy—or nervous and scared. It may change your senses of sight, hearing, and touch. Marijuana can make it hard to think clearly. In rare cases, some people start seeing things that are not real, called hallucinations.

Some slang names for marijuana are:

- Weed
- Pot
- Grass
- Herb
- Boom

NEXT: Signs of Marijuana Use

Signs of Marijuana Use



©iStock.com/RusN

Someone taking marijuana can:

- get dizzy
- laugh for no reason
- have red, bloodshot eyes
- forget things that just happened

Marijuana makes you feel like time is slowing down. Minutes can feel like hours. At the same time, everyday sights, sounds, and tastes may seem really interesting or funny.

Marijuana can make you feel very hungry. You want to eat lots of junk food. Some people call this "the munchies."

People who smoke marijuana often smell like it afterwards. Marijuana smells sweeter than cigarette smoke. A person might use incense, cologne, or perfume to try to hide the smell.

NEXT: Effects of Marijuana on Brains and Bodies

Effects of Marijuana on Brains and Bodies

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Marijuana smoke can hurt your lungs and cause some of the same coughing and breathing problems faced by people who smoke cigarettes.

These are just some of the problems marijuana can cause:

Memory Problems

Marijuana makes it hard to remember things that just happened a few minutes ago. That makes it hard to learn in school or to pay attention to your job.

Heart Problems

Using marijuana makes the heart beat fast and raises your risk of having a heart attack.

Warning about Lung Illnesses and Deaths

Many people are adding marijuana to the oil they put in vaping devices (e-cigarettes). The lungs are not designed to filter out some oils, and there have been thousands of lung illnesses and dozens of deaths related to vaping marijuana. Sometimes the marijuana is added to the nicotine in a vaping device. The Government has warned against using any vaping products that have THC, one of the main chemicals in marijuana. Here is a fact sheet with up-to-date information.

People who smoke marijuana can get some of the same coughing and breathing problems as people who smoke cigarettes. Marijuana smoke can hurt your lungs.

Drugged Driving

Driving when you're high on marijuana is dangerous. It is similar to driving drunk. Your reactions to traffic signs and sounds are slow. It's hard to pay attention to the road. And it's even worse when you're high on marijuana and alcohol at the same time.

Not Caring about Life

Over time, people who use marijuana can get "burnt out." They don't think about much or do much. They can't concentrate. They don't seem to care about anything but smoking marijuana.

Overdose

An overdose happens when a person uses enough of a drug to have a very bad reaction or death. People can overdose on marijuana when they take too much of it. This can cause very uncomfortable side effects. In recent years, emergency room doctors are seeing more overdoses in people who eat marijuana edibles (gummies, lollipops and other foods). It takes longer to feel high from edibles than from smoking. Because of this, sometimes people eat too much because they think it isn’t working.

Signs of marijuana overdose are:

- a lot of anxiety (feeling very worried)
- panic attacks
- paranoia (thinking people are out to get you)
- hallucinations (seeing things that aren’t there)

We do not know of any person who has died from using just marijuana.

Addiction

Although some people don't know it, you can get addicted to marijuana after using it for a while. Over time, it can change the way your brain works. If you stop using it, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

This is more likely to happen to people who use marijuana every day or who started using it when they were teenagers. They might need to smoke more and more of it to get the same high.

People who are trying to quit using marijuana can:

- be in a bad mood
- feel nervous
- have trouble sleeping

They will feel a strong need to take the drug.

Fortunately, there is counseling that can help someone with a marijuana addiction.

Remember that even if you get treatment, it can be hard to stay off the drug. People who stopped using marijuana can still feel strong cravings for the drug, sometimes even years later. This is normal. This is also why it’s important to stay in treatment for as long as your doctor suggests.

NEXT: What is medical marijuana?

What is medical marijuana?

Photo by NIDA

The marijuana plant has chemicals that can help with some health problems. More states are making it legal to use the plant as medicine for certain illnesses. But there isn’t enough research to show that the whole plant works to treat or cure these conditions. Also, the U.S. government still doesn't think of marijuana as medicine, so it's still illegal at the national level.

A few medicines have been made as pills and oils. These medicines have chemicals that are like the ones in the marijuana plant, but are not the same type that people usually smoke. They can:

- treat nausea if you have cancer
- make you hungry if you have AIDS and don’t feel like eating

Smoking medical marijuana can also hurt your lungs. These and other effects on the brain and body could make marijuana medicine more harmful than helpful.

Another problem with marijuana as a medicine is that the ingredients aren't exactly the same from plant to plant. There's no way to know what you're getting.

Scientists are trying to find ways to make safe medicines from marijuana.

NEXT: MDMA (Ecstasy, Molly) Facts

MDMA (Ecstasy, Molly) Facts

Photo by Wikimedia Commons/Ecstasy Monogram

MDMA is a drug that people often use at parties and clubs. It affects your mood and how you feel about your surroundings.

People who use MDMA usually take it as a capsule or tablet. Some might snort the powder. Others swallow it as liquid. Sometimes people take MDMA with other drugs like alcohol or marijuana.

Some names for MDMA are:

- Ecstasy
- Molly
- X
- E
- Love drug

NEXT: Signs of MDMA Use

Signs of MDMA Use

©iStock.com/Lajos Rapasi

Some people feel very tired or have trouble focusing when they try to quit MDMA.

MDMA makes people feel very friendly and loving, but it has negative effects too. You can become moody or have sleep problems.

After people take MDMA, they might:

- feel dizzy
- have muscle cramps
- clench their teeth
- have a fast heart beat
- have high blood pressure
- feel very hot

This can be dangerous in crowds or on the dance floor where it's already too hot. Once the effects wear off, you could feel sad or nervous for days.

Heavy use of MDMA can give you problems that last a long time. You may feel confused or depressed a lot. Or you might have problems with your memory.

NEXT: Effects of MDMA on Brains and Bodies

Effects of MDMA on Brains and Bodies

These are some problems that MDMA can cause:

Sickness

MDMA can make you throw up. You might also get the chills or the sweats.

Overheating

MDMA can make your body very, very hot.

No Appetite

MDMA can make you not want to eat. Over time, you might lose too much weight and get sick.

Overdose

People can overdose on MDMA. Your body can get so hot that it can cause liver, kidney, or heart failure. In rare cases, you can even die.

Addiction

You can become addicted to MDMA. Over time, it can change the way your brain works. If you stop using it, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction. If you are addicted to MDMA and try to quit the drug, you can feel:

- irritable
- nervous
- depressed
- very tired
- unable to focus
- like you need to take more MDMA

Fortunately, counseling can help someone with an MDMA addiction.

Remember that even if you get treatment, it can be hard to stay off the drug. People who stopped using MDMA can still feel strong cravings for the drug, sometimes even years later. This is normal. This is also why it’s

important to stay in treatment for as long as your doctor suggests.

Meth (Crank, Ice) Facts

Photo © by DEA

Methamphetamine—meth for short—is a white, bitter powder. Sometimes it's made into a white pill or a clear or white shiny rock (called a crystal).

Smoking meth is the most common way it is used. Some mix the powder with liquid and inject it (shoot up) into their bodies with a needle. Others take the meth powder by mouth or snort it up the nose.

Meth causes a rush of good feelings at first. People who take it can then feel nervous, overly excited, angry, or afraid. Their thoughts and actions go really fast. They might feel too hot.

Some slang names for meth are:

- Crank
- Ice
- Crystal
- Glass
- Chalk

NEXT: Signs of Meth Use

Signs of Meth Use

©istock.com/kieferpix

Meth can make a person's mood change quickly. For example, someone using meth might become angry and violent.

Meth speeds up breathing and raises blood pressure.

Meth can make people hyperactive—full of too much energy. They might talk and move around a lot. They might not stop to eat or sleep.

People who use meth often scratch their skin, causing sores. They might have burns on their lips or fingers from holding a hot meth pipe.

Meth can make a person's mood change quickly. For example, they might feel excited, and then become angry and violent. They might feel afraid that someone's out to get them. They might want to end their own life.

NEXT: Effects of Meth on Brains and Bodies

Effects of Meth on Brains and Bodies

Photo by ©istock.com/watanyou

These are just some of the problems meth can cause:

Overheating

Meth can make your body so hot that you pass out. Sometimes this can kill you.

Crank Bugs

Meth can make you feel like bugs are crawling on or under your skin. It makes you scratch a lot. Scratching causes sores on your face and arms.

Meth Mouth

People who use meth can break, stain, or rot their teeth. They often drink lots of sweet things, grind their teeth, and have dry mouth. This is called "meth mouth."

Looking Old

People who use meth can start looking old. They burn a lot of energy and don't eat well. This can make them lose weight and look sick. Their hands or body might shake. Their skin looks dull and has sores and pimples that don't heal. Their mouth looks sunken as the teeth go bad.

HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis

People who inject meth can get HIV/AIDS or hepatitis (a liver disease) if they share used needles. People also get these diseases by having unsafe sex. They often forget to use condoms because they're high on the drug.

Overdose

People can overdose on meth when they take too much of it. Sometimes drug dealers add other dangerous chemicals to meth that can help cause an overdose. They might get so hot that they pass out. If they don’t get help right away, they can die. A meth overdose can also cause a stroke (“brain attack”), heart attack, or liver failure. These can all cause death.

Addiction

You can become addicted to meth. Over time, it can change the way your brain works. If you stop using meth, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

People who get addicted to meth start needing to take more of it to get the same high. People who usually snort meth or take it by mouth might start to smoke or inject it to get a stronger, quicker high.

Meth use can hurt different parts of your brain. It can cause thinking and emotional problems that don't go away. Even after you quit using meth, the thoughts can come back. For example, you might feel, hear, or see things that aren't there. You might think that people are out to get you or start believing strange ideas that can't really be true.

People who are trying to quit taking meth might:

- feel sad
- get really tired but have trouble sleeping
- feel angry or nervous
- be unable to feel happy

They will feel a very strong need to take the drug.

Fortunately, there is counseling that can help someone with a meth addiction.

Remember that even if you get treatment, it can be hard to stay off the drug. People who stopped using meth can still feel strong cravings for the drug, sometimes even years later. This is normal. This is also why it’s

important to stay in treatment for as long as your doctor suggests.

Pain Medicine (Oxy, Vike) Facts

Photo by © iStock.com/David Tulk

Pain medicines make pain feel better after surgery or injuries. You need a doctor's note (called a prescription) to buy strong pain medicines, called “opioids.” Prescription pain medicines are legal and helpful to use when a doctor orders them to treat your medical problem.

You may have heard people talking a lot about opioids lately. People sometimes take them without a doctor's prescription to get high. Drug dealers sell these pills just like they sell heroin or cocaine. Some people get or steal these pills from other people.

Some people think that prescription pain medicines are safer to use than "street" drugs because they are medicines. Prescription pain medicines can be as dangerous as heroin or cocaine. In fact, they have most of the same chemicals as heroin.

Examples of prescription pain medicines are:

- oxycodone (brand names: OxyContin® or Percocet®)
- hydrocodone (brand name: Vicodin®)

Pain medicines are usually white, round, or oval pills. They can be swallowed, smoked, or crushed into a powder that is snorted or injected with a needle.

Like heroin, pain pills can cause a rush of good feelings when they're first taken. They can also make you want to throw up. They can make you very sleepy. And you can get addicted to them.

Some slang names for oxycodone are:

- Oxy
- Cotton
- Percs

Some slang names for hydrocodone are:

- Vikes
- Vikings

NEXT: Signs of Pain Medicine Use and Misuse

Signs of Pain Medicine Use and Misuse

Photo by ©istock.com/Wavebreakmedia

People who get addicted to pain medicines need to take more of the drug to get the same high. Some people might visit different doctors for prescriptions and fill them at different pharmacies. They also might steal these pills from medicine cabinets of people they know.

Misusing pain medicine can cause:

- throwing up
- constipation (trouble "pooping")
- pupils to get very small (pupils are the black circle in the center of each eye)

When people smoke, snort, or inject pain medicines, they get a stronger high than swallowing the pills. This stronger high is more dangerous and can cause problems breathing.

NEXT: Effects of Pain Medicine Misuse on Brains and Bodies

Effects of Pain Medicine Misuse on Brains and Bodies

Photo by ©istock.com/STEFANOLUNARDI

Pain medicine abuse can put you in a coma. That's when nothing can wake you up.

These are just some of the problems pain medicine misuse can cause:

Stopped Breathing

Pain medicine misuse can slow or stop your breathing.

Coma

Pain medicine misuse can put you in a coma. That's when nothing can wake you up.

Overdose

Many people die from pain medicine overdoses because they stop breathing. In fact, more people overdose from pain medicines every year than from other drugs.

Signs of a pain medicine overdose are:

- cold and sweaty skin
- confusion, shaking
- extreme sleepiness
- hard to wake the person up
- unable to speak

- trouble breathing
- coma

If someone you know has any of these signs, you should call 911 right away. Say that the person isn't responding or breathing.

Overdose Treatment

You can overdose from heroin or prescription pain medicine use. Naloxone is a medicine that can quickly reverse an opioid overdose. If someone overdoses on pain medicine, it can save their life. Families can keep naloxone in their home. Ask a pharmacist how to get it.

Addiction

Prescription pain medicines can be helpful for your pain but it can also be as addictive as heroin. You can become addicted to pain medicines. Over time, it can change the way your brain works. If you stop taking the medicine, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

You can take the following steps to make sure you are taking the drugs like you're supposed to:

- Follow the directions as explained by your doctor or pharmacist.
- Be aware that some drugs and alcohol can make your side effects worse.
- Don't stop or change your dose without first talking to your doctor about it.
- Don't use someone else's prescription.
- Never give your medicines to others.
- Store your medicines safely.

If you are addicted, and you try to stop, you might:

- have pain in muscles and bones
- get chills
- throw up
- have diarrhea ("the runs")
- feel nervous, angry, or very sad
- be unable to sleep
- have a strong need to take the drug

The good news is that there are medicines that can help. Counseling can also help.

Remember that even if you get treatment, it can be hard to stay away from medicines you aren’t supposed to take. Your body might crave it. These cravings can still happen years later. It may take many tries to stop. This is normal. This is also why it’s important to stay in treatment for as long as your doctor suggests.

Spice (K2) Facts

Photo by ©DEA

Spice is an illegal drug. People make it by spraying chemicals onto shredded, dried plant materials. They also can make it a liquid.

Some of the chemicals are similar to the ones in the marijuana plant. This is why people call it "fake weed." It is important to know that Spice is *not* the same as marijuana. Spice may affect your brain more strongly than marijuana. You can't predict what will happen when you take Spice. The effects can be very serious and can even cause death.

People usually smoke Spice. Some people use a liquid form to vape (like in e-cigarettes) or they put it in a drink. Others burn the liquid and use it as incense.

Some names of other similar products are:

- K2
- Black Mamba
- Herbal Incense
- Joker
- Kush
- Skunk

NEXT: Signs of Spice Use

Signs of Spice Use

The chemicals used in Spice can change from batch to batch. This means how the drug makes you feel can change too. Spice can make you happy or relaxed at first. But then you can start feeling really nervous, confused, or like you might throw up. Your heart beats fast. You might see, feel, or hear things that aren't there. You can start to feel afraid or angry. You may think about ending your life.

NEXT: Effects of Spice on Brains and Bodies

Effects of Spice on Brains and Bodies

Photo by ©Shutterstock/Sabphoto

When the high from Spice wears off, you can have headaches or feel depressed.

People who use Spice sometimes end up in the emergency room because of a heart attack, kidney damage, or seizures (when your body starts twitching and jerking uncontrollably).

These are some problems that Spice can cause:

Sickness

Spice can cause headaches. It can also make you throw up.

Heart Attack

Spice can cause your heart to beat faster and your blood pressure to go up. This can give you a heart attack, which could lead to death.

Overdose

People can overdose on Spice. More people are going to the emergency room for Spice overdoses. Spice can cause death.

Addiction

You can get addicted to Spice after using it for a while. Over time, it can change the way your brain works. If you stop using Spice, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

When the high goes away, you can have headaches or feel irritable, nervous, or depressed. You have strong cravings to take more Spice to feel good again.

At this time, doctors and scientists have not tested medicines or counseling to treat a Spice addiction. But there are treatment programs available that focus on changing behaviors.

Vaping, Nicotine and Tobacco Facts

vaping devices

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Photo by © iStock/BackyardProduction

Vaping Facts

Vaping devices, also known as e-cigarettes, heat a liquid to cause a mist (called aerosol), which is then inhaled into the lungs. The heated liquid usually contains nicotine, a chemical that comes from tobacco. The liquid might also contain flavorings, and sometimes THC, the chemical in marijuana that makes you high.

Vaping devices can look like regular tobacco cigarettes or even everyday items like pens or USB memory sticks (flash drives).

Other names for vaping devices:

- e-cigs
- e-hookahs
- hookah pens
- vapes
- vape pens
- mods (customizable, more powerful vaporizers)

Tobacco and Nicotine Facts

Photo by ©Shutterstock.com/Richard M Lee

Tobacco is a plant grown for its leaves. The leaves are dried and crushed before they are put in tobacco products.

Tobacco has a lot of chemicals that can hurt your body. One major chemical is called nicotine.

Nicotine excites the parts of the brain that make you feel good. It quickly gives you a small rush of pleasure and energy. But it soon goes away. This makes you want to use more. Sometimes nicotine can make you nervous and jittery.

People can smoke, chew, or sniff tobacco.

NEWS: If you are under 21 years old, you can no longer legally buy cigarettes, cigars, nicotine vaping devices or any other tobacco product in the U.S. The new law went into effect for all states beginning in 2020.

People can smoke tobacco with:

- cigarettes
- cigars
- pipes
- hookahs (water pipes)

People can chew tobacco with:

- chewing tobacco
- snuff
- dip
- snus

People can sniff tobacco with a product called snuff, which is put in the

nose and sniffed.

People can also vape nicotine with e-cigarettes or vaporizers. You can learn more about these products in our E-Cigarette Facts.

Some slang names for cigarettes are:

- smokes
- cancer sticks
- coffin nails

Some slang names for chewing tobacco and snuff are:

- chew
- wad
- dip

NEXT: Signs of Vaping, Tobacco, or Nicotine Use

Signs of Vaping, Nicotine or Tobacco Use

Photo by ©istock.com/Wavebreakmedia

People who smoke tobacco or vape might get a cough that won't go away.

Nicotine is the chemical in tobacco that makes you feel good. It can also raise your blood pressure. Your heart might beat faster. You might breathe faster. And it can make you not want to eat.

People who smoke or vape might get a cough that won't go away.

People who smoke cigarettes will usually have hair, clothes, and breath that smell like cigarettes. Vaping does not leave behind the smell of tobacco, which makes it easier to hide it from parents and teachers.

People who chew tobacco tend to spit a lot.

People often sneeze when they inhale snuff.

NEXT: Effects of Vaping, Nicotine and Tobacco on Brains and Bodies

Effects of Vaping, Nicotine, and Tobacco on Brains and Bodies

Photo by ©istock.com/brebca

If a pregnant woman uses tobacco, her baby might be born too early or too small. This can cause health problems for the baby.

These are just some of the problems tobacco and nicotine can cause:

Lung Diseases

Vaping is new, so we don't have enough research to know all the effects on the body, but many of the effects on the lungs will be the same as regular smoking. In fact, the government has reported thousands of lung illnesses and dozens of deaths of people who have vaped nicotine, marijuana or both. Human lungs are not designed to filter some of the oil in these products, and the exact causes of the illnesses are being studied. The government warns against using any vaping products with marijuana, or any that are made at home or on the street. You can find more information here.

Health experts have become concerned that too many teens are vaping. Studies show that young people are especially attracted to flavored vaping cartridges. So, the U.S. Congress passed a law saying you have to be 21 years old to buy vaping or other tobacco products, and it also banned the sale of most flavored liquids such as fruit and mint. The new rules start in 2020.

Regular cigarette smoking causes lung cancer. It can also cause painful

breathing diseases like emphysema. These diseases can happen to people who smoke. People who breathe in other people's smoke can also get these diseases.

Bad Breath, Bad Teeth, Mouth Cancer

Cigarettes and other kinds of tobacco stain teeth and cause bad breath. Chewing tobacco can make teeth fall out and lead to cancer of the mouth. Vaping does not leave behind the brown stains on the teeth, but we don’t yet know how it affects the mouth after years of use.

Heart and Blood Problems

If you smoke, you're more likely to have a heart attack or stroke ("brain attack").

Health Problems for Babies

If a pregnant woman smokes, her baby might be born too early or too small. This can cause health problems for the baby.

Health Problems for Teens

The teen years are important for brain growth. Your brain grows until you are about 25 years old. When you inhale smoke, the nicotine makes its way to the brain, and using nicotine products can change the way the brain grows.

Nicotine Poisoning

Nicotine poisoning often happens when young children chew nicotine gum or patches that people use to quit. Or they might swallow e-cigarette liquid that contains nicotine.

Signs of a nicotine poisoning are:

- having trouble breathing
- throwing up
- fainting
- headache
- heart beating really fast or really slowly

If a child has any of these signs after eating or drinking nicotine, you should call 911 right away.

Addiction

You can become addicted to nicotine just like other drugs—from vaping, smoking, or chewing tobacco (snuff). When you smoke, the nicotine quickly gives you a small rush of pleasure and energy. But it soon goes away. This makes you want to use the nicotine product again and again throughout the day.

Over time, nicotine can change the way your brain works. If you stop using it, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

People who are trying to stop nicotine use might:

- be cranky
- have problems paying attention
- have trouble sleeping
- eat more
- crave nicotine

Fortunately, there are many ways to quit smoking or using other tobacco products. Some examples are:

- counseling
- nicotine replacement therapy, like chewing gum and patches
- medicines

Some people think that using e-cigarettes will help them quit smoking regular cigarettes, but there is no proof that e-cigarettes help people stop smoking. Also, studies have shown that teens who use e-cigarettes are likely to start smoking cigarettes in the future.

The phone number 1-800-QUIT-NOW will connect you with people that can help you quit.

Here is some online information on how to stop vaping.

Other Drugs People Use and Misuse

Photo by ©iStock.com/davidf

People can inhale spray paint and use it as a drug.

There are many other drugs that people use and misuse. Some of the drugs in this website are called "club drugs." They are drugs that you might be likely to find at a nightclub or party. Examples are MDMA, methamphetamine, LSD, GHB, Rohypnol®, and ketamine.

LSD (Acid) is a very strong mood-changing chemical. It is made from an acid that is found on fungus that grows on rye and other grains.

People can take it two ways. It can be a pill that you swallow. It can also be a small piece of paper that is wet with liquid LSD. You put this piece of paper on your tongue.

It makes you see, hear, and feel things that aren't there (hallucinations). You might see bright colors, pretty pictures, or things that scare you. It can cause your heart to beat faster, sleep problems, panic, sweating, and paranoia. For more information about LSD, visit our Hallucinogens webpage.

PCP (Angel Dust) is a pill or powder that people can eat, smoke, or snort up their nose. It was first made in the 1950s to help with pain during surgery. It's no longer used for this purpose because of its bad side effects. It makes people feel like they are in another world. PCP also often makes people feel angry and violent and they often get arrested because of violent behaviors. For more information about PCP, visit our Hallucinogens webpage.

Inhalants are dangerous chemicals that make you feel high when you breathe them in (called huffing, snorting, bagging, or sniffing). Household cleaners, spray cans, glue, and even permanent markers contain these chemicals. Inhalants can make you pass out, stop your heart, stop your breathing, and kill you. For more information about inhalants, visit our Inhalants webpage.

GHB is a liquid or powder that is used for people to fall asleep more easily. However, some people use it to make you pass out. It's called a "date rape" drug because someone can secretly put it in your drink. This means that you can't fight back or defend yourself against someone who wants to have sex with you without permission. For more information about GHB, visit our Commonly Abused Drug Charts.

Rohypnol® (Roofies) is a medicine used to calm someone down or help them sleep. But people also use this as a "date rape" pill because it can make someone not remember what happened for the time right after taking the pill. It can also be put in a drink. Visit our Commonly Abused Drug Charts for more information.

Ketamine (K, Special K) is a medicine that is used for pain in animals but some humans take it to get high. It can make you feel far away from what's going on around you. It can also make you feel scared and be unpleasant. People usually take it by mouth, snort it up the nose, or inject it (shoot up) with a needle. For more information about Ketamine, visit our Club Drugs webpage.