

TEN QUESTIONS TEENAGERS ASK MOST ABOUT DRUGS — AND THEIR ANSWERS

1. How Can You Be Sure That a Drug Is Pure?

You can't. That's what is scary. One drug may be mixed with another drug; that is called lacing. Lacing of street drugs is common, and the person taking the drug never knows whether the drug is laced. Cocaine is often laced with speed or other stimulants. Sometimes marijuana is laced with PCP.

2. Can You Die From Cocaine or Crack?

Yes. Cocaine and crack constrict blood vessels and increase the heart rate, breathing rate, and blood pressure. People may die because cocaine and crack force the heart and respiratory system to overwork. A single dose of cocaine or crack can cause a heart attack, stroke, or seizure.

3. Do most teenagers use drugs?

Most teenagers really don't use drugs. A nationwide study of middle grade through tenth grade students shows that most do not use tobacco, alcohol, marijuana or any form of illicit drugs.†

Teenagers say the reason they don't use alcohol and other drugs is because these substances are hard on their health. Teens say they can't perform in sports or school as well when they do drugs regularly - or even once in a while.

4. What Happens When You Mix Alcohol with Marijuana or Depressants?

Any time you mix two drugs together, it is dangerous. The most dangerous combination is alcohol and sleeping pills or other depressants, such as heroin, codeine, and some tranquilizers. A person taking these drugs may stop breathing or have heart failure. When alcohol and marijuana are taken together, it can cause a person to become very disoriented and to have an even slower reaction time than if either drug were taken alone.

5. What is LSD? Shrooms?

LSD is an hallucinogen with sometimes serious and generally unpredictable side effects, including delusions, confusion and flashbacks. Its effects don't start wearing off for nearly 12 hours.

Shrooms is a slang term for psychedelic mushrooms. When people take shrooms, their brain chemistry is altered and they hallucinate.

6. Which Drugs are the Most Dangerous?

Drugs are dangerous in different ways:

- Marijuana is dangerous because it is psychologically addictive, distorts perceptions, and contributes to memory loss.

†National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

- Nicotine is dangerous because it is addictive. Smoking cigarettes may result in cancer, heart attack, or death.
- Alcohol is dangerous because it impairs judgment and can cause alcohol poisoning. Drinking and driving don't mix. Even one drink can affect your ability to drive safely.
- Depressants (alcohol, barbiturates, heroin, opium, sleeping pills, and tranquilizers) are dangerous because too much of any of these drugs may cause coma or death.
- Stimulants (methamphetamine, diet pills and cocaine) are dangerous because they can cause stroke, seizure, heart attack, or death. Over time, people who take stimulants can suffer from malnutrition and become paranoid.
- Hallucinogens are dangerous because they distort reality. A person taking LSD or shrooms may decide to step out of a third-story window because the ground looks so close or because the person thinks he or she can fly. Many people have been hurt or have died accidentally after taking an hallucinogen.
- PCP is dangerous because it numbs the body and can alter your mind and your sense of reality. PCP users often become violent, do self-destructive things, and can't feel pain. People on PCP have walked through windows, burned themselves, and even cut off parts of their bodies.

7. What Are Club Drugs?

Club Drugs get their name by use at dance clubs and "raves." They do not fall into one drug category, but have a mixture of depressant, hallucinogenic, stimulant, and amnesiac (causing memory loss) properties.

- **Ecstasy** ("X," "Adam," or "MDMA") is a stimulant and a hallucinogen. People may use Ecstasy to improve their moods or get energy to keep dancing; however, chronic abuse of Ecstasy appears to damage the brain's ability to think and regulate emotion, memory, sleep, and pain. In high doses it can cause a sharp increase in body temperature, leading to muscle breakdown and kidney and cardiovascular system failure.
- **GHB** ("G," "Liquid Ecstasy," "Georgia Home Boy," or Gamma-hydroxybutyrate) has been used for body building and as a "date rape drug." Coma and seizures can occur following abuse of GHB and, when combined with methamphetamine, there appears to be an increased risk of seizure. Combining use with other drugs such as alcohol can result in nausea and difficulty breathing.
- **Rohypnol** ("Roofie" or "Roche") is tasteless and odorless. It mixes easily in carbonated beverages. Rohypnol can cause individuals under the influence of the drug to forget what happened, hence its nickname "date rape drug." Rohypnol can be lethal when mixed with alcohol and/or other depressants.
- **Ketamine** ("Special K" or "K") is an anesthetic. Use of a small amount of Ketamine results in loss of attention span, learning ability, and memory. At higher doses, Ketamine can cause delirium, amnesia, high blood pressure, depression, and severe breathing problems.

- **Methamphetamine** (“Speed,” “Ice,” “Chalk,” or “Meth”) use can cause serious health concerns, including memory loss, aggression, violence, psychotic behavior, and heart problems.
- **LSD** (“Acid” or Lysergic Acid Diethylamide) See Question 5 (Student Handout, page 9.15).

8. Why are Toxic Fumes so Dangerous to Inhale?

The fumes from toxic chemicals can kill you fast (heart stops, suffocation, accidents) or slowly (brain damage). They can also cause permanent injuries such as nerve or kidney damage, permanent paralysis or shaking, brain damage and loss of bladder control.

9. How Can You Tell Whether a Person Is an Alcoholic?

Alcoholism is a disease. A person who has it must have alcohol to feel mentally and physically okay. A person is an alcoholic if drinking interferes with his or her family, school, or social life. Of all the people who drink alcohol, one out of every ten will become an alcoholic.

No one knows for sure who is likely to become an alcoholic, but studies show that if you have a family member who is an alcoholic, you are more likely to become one yourself. Following are some signs that a person is addicted to alcohol:

- Drinking regularly to relieve shyness, fear, or anger.
- Drinking first thing in the morning.
- Drinking alone regularly.
- Having problems with school or work due to drinking.
- Needing a drink at a definite time every day.
- Having a loss of memory during or after drinking.
- Becoming more moody or irritable after drinking.

10. Are Any Drugs Legal?

Almost all drugs, including alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana, are illegal for teenagers. In all states, alcohol is illegal for anyone under twenty-one years of age. It is also illegal in all states for teenagers under the age of 18 to buy cigarettes. Except for medical purposes, it is illegal for anyone to buy marijuana in all states. It is illegal for anyone to possess heroin, opium, cocaine, methamphetamine, ecstasy, LSD or PCP.

Sleeping pills, steroids, amphetamines, and tranquilizers are legal by prescription only. They are not generally prescribed for teenagers.

Smoking cigarettes or taking drugs violates rules in most schools.

Inhalants are not drugs. They are toxic substances that are legal when used for the purposes for which they were intended. When toxic chemicals are put up to your nose or mouth and inhaled to get high, they act like drugs, but are poisonous.