

Effects of Alcohol and Drugs on the Body

Alcohol

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant and is the most widely abused drug.

A 12 ounce can of beer, a 5 ounce glass of wine and 1 ½ ounce shot of hard liquor all contain the same amount of alcohol. Coffee, cold showers and exercise do not quicken sobriety. Each one-half ounce of alcohol takes the average body about one hour to process and eliminate.

Alcohol first acts on those parts of the brain that affect self control and other learned behaviors. Low self-control often leads to the aggressive behavior associated with some people who drink. In large doses, alcohol can dull sensation and impair muscular coordination, memory and judgment. Taken in larger quantities over a long period of time, alcohol can damage the liver and heart and can cause permanent brain damage. On the average heavy drinkers shorten their lifespan by about 10 years.

Other Effects

- Impaired driving ability
- Impaired vision and judgment
- Reduced coordination and reflex action
- Overindulgence (hangover) can cause headaches, nausea, dehydration, unclear thinking, aching muscles, etc.

You may observe slurred speech, bloodshot and watery eyes, poor balance, odor on breath, involuntary or sudden movement of the eyes.

Marijuana

Marijuana is also called grass, pot, weed, Mary Jane, Acapulco Gold, joint, roach, and other street names.

Marijuana stays in the body for up to 28 days, depending on usage.

Marijuana alters sense of time and reduces the ability to perform tasks requiring concentration, swift reactions, and coordination. The drug has a significant effect on judgment, caution, and sensory or motor abilities.

Other Effects

- Impairs driving ability for at least 4-6 hours after smoking one "joint"
- Inability to concentrate
- Restlessness
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Erratic behavior and rapidly changing emotions
- Altered Sense of identity
- Impaired Memory
- Dulling of attention
- Hallucinations, fantasies and paranoia
- Reduction or temporary loss of fertility

Cocaine

Cocaine is a stimulant drug, increasing heart rate and blood pressure. As a powder, cocaine is inhaled (snorted), ingested, or injected. It is known as coke, snow, nose candy, lady, and various street names. Cocaine is also used and free-base cocaine known as crack or rock, which is smoked. It acquired its name from the popping sound heard when it is heated.

Some people think that because crack is smoked it is safer than other forms of cocaine use. It is not. Crack cocaine is one of the most addictive substances known today. The crack high is reached in 4-6 seconds and lasts about 15 minutes.

One of the most dangerous effects of crack is that it can cause vomiting, rapid heartbeat, tremors and convulsive movements. All of this muscle activity increases the demand for oxygen, which can result in a cocaine induced heart attack. Since the heat regulating center in the brain is also disrupted, dangerously high body temperatures can occur. With high doses, brain functioning, breathing and heartbeat are depressed- leading to death.

Other Effects

- A "rush" of pleasurable sensations
- Heightened, but momentary feeling of confidence, strength and endurance
- Accelerated pulse, blood pressure and respiration
- Impaired driving ability
- Paranoia, can trigger mental disorders in users prone to mental instability
- Repeated sniffing/snorting caused irritation of the nostrils and nasal membrane
- Mood swings
- Anxiety
- Reduced sense of humor
- Compulsive behavior such as teeth grinding or repeated hand washing.

You may observe uncontrolled talkativeness, difficulty in focusing the eyes, dilated pupils, excitable behavior, sniffles and/or runny nose, body tremors, teeth grinding, and distorted thinking.

Amphetamines

Amphetamines are drugs that stimulated the central nervous system and promote a feeling of alertness and increase in speech and general physical activity. Some common street names for amphetamines are speed, uppers, black beauties, bennies, wake-ups, footballs, and dexies.

People with a history of sustained low-dose use quite often become dependent and believe they need the drug to get by. These users frequently keep taking amphetamines to avoid the "down" mood they experience when the "high" wears off.

Even small, infrequent doses can produce toxic effects in some people. Restlessness, anxiety, mood swings, panic, heartbeat disturbances, paranoid

thoughts, hallucinations, convulsions, and coma have been reported. Long term users often have acne resembling measles, trouble with their teeth, gums and nails, and dry, dull hair. Heavy frequent doses can produce brain damage resulting in speech and disturbances.

Other Effects

- Loss of appetite
- Anxiety, irritability, apprehension
- Difficulty in focusing eyes
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Distorted thinking
- Perspiration, headaches and dizziness
- Short term insomnia

You may observe dilated pupils, distorted thinking, and exaggerated reflexes, hallucinations, teeth grinding, anorexia, loss of coordination and physical collapse.

Physical exertion increases the hazards of stimulants because these drugs already increase heart rate and blood pressure. Fatalities have been reported among athletes who have taken even moderate amounts of stimulants

Opiates

Opiates, including heroin, morphine, and codeine are narcotics used to relieve pain and induce sleep. Common street names are horse, hard stuff, morpho, M, brown sugar, Harry, Mr. H, junk and smack.

Heroin accounts for 90% of the narcotic abuse in this country.

Narcotics found in prescription medicines are sometimes abused. This includes pain relievers containing opium and cough syrups containing codeine. Heroin is illegal, and cannot be obtained with a physician's prescription.

Most medical problems are caused by the uncertain dosage level, use of unsterile needles, contamination of the drug, or combination of a narcotic with other drugs. These dangers depend on the specific drug, its source and the way it is used.

Other Effects

- Impaired driving ability
- Short-lived state of euphoria
- Drowsiness followed by sleep
- Constipation
- Decreased physical activity
- Reduced vision
- Change in sleeping habits
- Possible death

You may observe constricted pupils, droopy eyelids, dry mouth, low raspy speech, depressed reflexes and poor coordination.

PCP

Phencyclidine or PCP, also called angel dust, rocket fuel, super kools, and killer weed was developed as a surgical anesthetic in the late 1950's. Later due to its unusual side effects in humans, it was restricted to use as a veterinary anesthetic and tranquilizer. Today it has no lawful use and is not longer legally manufactured.

PCP is a very dangerous drug. It can produce violent and bizarre behavior even in people not otherwise prone to such behavior. More people die from accidents caused by the erratic and unpredictable behavior produced by the drug than from the drug's direct effect on the body.

PCP scrambles the brain's internal stimuli and alters how users see and deal with their environment. Routine activities like driving and walking become very difficult.

Low doses produce a rush, sometimes associated with a feeling of numbness. Increased doses produce an excited, confused state including any of the following: muscle rigidity, loss of concentration and memory, visual disturbances, delirium, feelings of isolation, and convulsions.

Other Effects

- Extreme agitation
- Drowsiness
- Perspiration
- Repetitive speech patterns
- Incomplete verbal responses
- Blank state

You may observe impaired driving ability, thick, slurred speech, poor coordination, violent, combative behavior, behavior recurring in cycles, involuntary eye movement, confusion, loss of memory and disoriented to time and environment.