



## Bingeing on Drugs

If people start to use alcohol and other drugs, they generally start off experimenting with small amounts of the drug. If a person enjoys the drug they may become 'recreational users' which means they may use the drug to relax and/or socialise. An example of this would be going to the pub on a Friday night to have a couple of drinks with mates. If those two drinks turned into four drinks with a few shots thrown in for good measure, then this would be called binge drinking which is proven to increase the risk of harm and injury.

A person can binge on drugs - legal and illegal. In a similar way to alcohol, bingeing on illegal drugs means that there is an increased risk of injury and harm. Unlike alcohol, there is no 'low risk' consumption recommendation for illegal drugs. A standard drink is a unit of measurement of alcohol which is metabolized in one hour and therefore the level of risk of consuming alcohol can be assessed<sup>1</sup>. Most drugs like methamphetamine (speed, base, ice), cocaine and ecstasy take at least 24-48 hours to completely leave the body and as there is no standard measure for them, it is impossible to calculate any risk from use.

Whilst there is a risk using any amount of an illegal drug, there are many other factors that can increase risks such as 'double dumping' or taking more than one pill at a time, mixing different stimulant drugs together or staying awake while high on drugs for more than 24 hours. Drugs affect everybody differently. Your brain chemistry is as individual as your face.

### Risk of injury and health problems related to bingeing

#### **Stimulants (ecstasy, cocaine, speed, ice)**

- Increased central nervous system activity
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Tremors
- Irregular heart beat
- Stomach cramps
- Restlessness
- Shortness of breathe
- Loss of coordination
- Collapse
- Delusions
- Hallucinations
- Bizarre behaviour
- Aggression
- Violence

#### **Depressants (GHB, heroin, sleeping pills)**

- Decreased central nervous system activity
- Impaired concentration
- Shallow breathing
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Sweating
- Tremors
- Loss of coordination
- Confusion
- Agitation
- Blackouts
- Seizure
- Coma
- Respiratory arrest, death

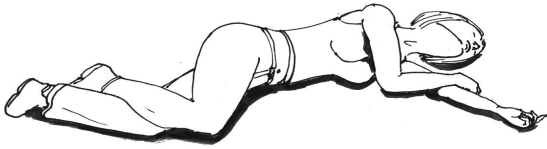
#### **Hallucinogens (LSD, ketamine, magic mushrooms, high doses of cannabis and ecstasy)**

- Anxiety
- Paranoia
- Panic
- Fear
- Bizarre behaviour

#### Overdose on ketamine:

- Convulsions
- Seizures
- Respiratory arrest, coma, death

## Re Balance Your Lifestyle



**Safety Tip:** Always let friends know what drugs you have taken in case of an emergency. The time saved in guess work could save your life.

If a mate has 'passed out' put them on their side in the recovery position and stay with them.

To call for help dial 000, or 112 on your mobile - this will connect you to emergency services even if you are out of range or have no credit!

### **Bingeing and mixing drugs**

If people are taking drugs to get 'smashed' it is likely they are using several drugs at once. Poly drug use can dramatically increase the effects of drugs or it may produce different and unpredictable reactions. In extreme cases it can result in overdose and death. If you are going to use drugs, using less and not mixing may reduce the potential for drug related problems.

### **Multiplying effects**

Drugs can act together and increase the effects of each other for example methamphetamine (speed, base and ice) and ecstasy, gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) and alcohol, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and cannabis. Getting 'off your face' in this way may sound like a great idea however, the potential for drug related toxicity and overdose is dramatically increased. The combined effects of the drugs hit the body twice as hard placing even greater strain on the heart and other vital organs.

### **Cancelling out effects**

Drugs can work against each other and can seem to "cancel out" the effects of one drug over the other for example ice and alcohol, cocaine and cannabis and LSD, alcohol and cannabis. These combinations place a huge stress on the body, it's like an internal chemical battle. The danger is that one drug wins out and masks the effects of the other. For example, people not experiencing the effects of alcohol when on stimulant drugs and thinking they are safe to drive.

### **Tolerance**

You can risk becoming a regular user of drugs if you have been bingeing a lot. Regular users can build tolerance which means your body becomes used to the effects of the drug and you need to take more and more to get the desired effect. Sometimes people reach a point where they just don't get the effect they want but crave the drug and find it very difficult to stop using. This is called

## Re Balance Your Lifestyle

dependence. People sometimes don't realise that their body is still under major stress, even if they have become tolerant to the effects of the drug.

### Useful links

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre [www.ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au](http://www.ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au)

Australian Drug Foundation [www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au)

Keep It Simple [www.kis.org.au](http://www.kis.org.au)

**1** <http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/standard>  
WA Community Drug Summit: Issues Paper No 1. June 2001  
ADF How Drugs Affect You Amphetamines [02], GHB [07], Hallucinogens [08]