

An Garda Síochána

Crime Prevention Information Sheet



Drugs Awareness

Advice for Parents/Guardians



Introduction

Drug taking is common in today's world. Aside from illegal drug taking, we also take many legal drugs such as alcohol, cigarettes, prescribed medicines etc. Children and young people are potentially exposed to drugs from an early age so it is important that parents/guardians are aware of what is happening with their children and what they are being exposed to.

This leaflet will give some general advice on types of drugs available, what forms they may take, warning signs to look out for and where to go for further advice and information.

Why do children take drugs

Young people may be exposed to drugs in some form at some stage in their life. Young people use drugs for many different reasons. Each person has his/her own reasons. Some factors that can influence their decisions to take drugs include:

- They are curious
- They want to experiment, have fun
- Their friends are taking them
- Peer pressure
- It's common in the neighbourhood
- They want to rebel
- They want to unwind, enjoy the sensation
- The drugs are affordable and easily available

Talk to your Children

Communication is vital, but we must listen as well as talk. Young people hear about drugs at an early age from television programmes, school friends, brothers, sisters and other persons. Quite often, they receive inaccurate or mixed messages about drugs. It's important that children and young people know the facts about drug taking and understand that it is dangerous, that it can harm them and that it is not cool.

- Find the time and space to talk to your children about drugs - don't rush it.
- Listening is vital - talk, listen and listen again.

- Find out what they know and ask them if they have any questions or are worried about anything.
- Don't lecture or interrogate them.
- Be a good role model with regard to alcohol consumption, taking prescribed medicines etc.
- To build self confidence, praise them as much as possible when deserved.
- Reassure them that it is OK to be independent and that they don't have to follow 'the crowd'.
- Show them that you love and care for them and that your primary concern is their safety and happiness.

Warning Signs to look out for

It can be quite difficult to tell if your child is using drugs. Signs of drug use can also be clouded by normal features of growing up e.g. moodiness, unpredictable behaviour etc. It's important to keep an eye on these changes and talk and listen to your children about them. Some signs that may warn of drug use include -

- Sudden mood changes
- Out of character aggressive or irritable behaviour
- Unusual sleep patterns or difficulty in sleeping
- Loss of interest in school, sport or other activities
- Alienation of friends
- Lying or unusually secretive behaviour
- Money going missing or items being sold
- Unusual objects found at home e.g. burnt tinfoil, empty plastic bags, powders, tablets, small pieces of folded paper etc.

Emergency Situation?

If your child appears seriously ill, very drowsy or unconscious, you need to get expert help immediately. Call the Emergency Services on 999 or 112. Don't panic, tell the Emergency Services clearly what symptoms your child has and don't leave the child on his/her own.

It is always a good idea for parents/guardians to undertake a course in First Aid which can be extremely helpful and valuable in many medical emergency situations.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS OR OTHER CRIME PREVENTION ISSUES,
PLEASE CONTACT
your local GARDA CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER
or
visit the Garda website at www.garda.ie**

Drugs - common types

Drugs can be categorised into different classes depending on their effects. The main ones that you are likely to encounter are -

- **Stimulants** - which make you feel more energetic, alert and awake.
- **Depressants** - which make you feel more relaxed and less inhibited
- **Hallucinogens** - which distort reality and produce hallucinations.

Alcohol - *depressant* - consumed as spirits, wines, beers and 'alcopops'.

Amphetamines - *stimulant* - commonly called speed, whiz. A grey or white powder that is snorted, smoked, swallowed, injected or dissolved in drink. Also available in tablet form.

Amyl Nitrate - *stimulant* - commonly called poppers. A clear yellow liquid that is sweet smelling when fresh. The vapour is breathed through the nose or mouth.

Cannabis - *hallucinogen* - commonly called grass, hash, dope, draw, blow. Comes as a solid resin, leaves, stalks and seeds or a dark oil. Usually smoked but can be eaten with food.

Cocaine - *stimulant* - commonly called coke, snow, charlie. Found as a white powder that is usually snorted or dissolved and injected.

Crack (cocaine) - *stimulant* - sometimes called rocks. Crack is a stronger version of cocaine comes as rocks or stones. Usually smoked.

Ecstasy - *stimulant / hallucinogen* - often referred to as 'E'. Comes as tablets of different shapes, sizes and colours, often with a designer logo. Ecstasy is swallowed.

Gammahydroxybutyrate - *depressant* - commonly called GHB, GBH, liquid ecstasy. Comes in small bottles as a colourless, odourless liquid. Occasionally in capsule form. Swallowed.

Heroin - *opiate / depressant* - commonly called gear, smack, scag. Generally found as a brownish-white powder. It is smoked, dissolved or injected.

Ketamine - *hallucinogen* - often called K, Special K, Ket or Vitamin K. Generally comes in the form of a white powder or liquid. Can be swallowed, inhaled or injected.

LSD - *hallucinogen* - found as small squares of paper or as tiny tablets called dots or microdots. It is swallowed.

Magic Mushrooms - *hallucinogen* - sometimes called mushies or shrooms. Grows wild in the autumn. Can be eaten raw, dried, cooked in food or stewed as tea.

Methadone - *depressant* - commonly called meth, linctus. Comes as a green, amber or blue liquid or as white tablets. Usually swallowed.

Methamphetamine - *stimulant* - often called crystal meth, ice, zip, meth, crazy medicine. Comes as a white powder or tablet. Powder is smoked, injected, snorted or dissolved in a drink. Tablet is swallowed.

Nicotine - *stimulant / depressant* - Usually smoked in cigarettes, pipes or cigars. Can also be chewed.

Solvents - *depressant* - usually found as gas canisters, sprays, glues etc. including gas lighter refills, disposable cigarette lighters, hairsprays, glue cans. It is normally breathed in through a cloth.

Tranquillisers - *depressant* - often called benzos, jellies or by the Brand name. Comes in branded tablets or capsules and is usually swallowed or injected.

Support Groups

The Regional and Local Drugs Task Forces are useful sources of information with regard to support services in Ireland. Contact details for these Task Forces can be found in the 'Don't Lose the Head' support booklet for parents and guardians, available on the Crosscare website (www.drugs.ie) for contact details.

Remember

**Stay calm,
Don't pre-judge,
Talk,
Don't lecture
Listen and listen more
Seek appropriate advice**

The advice contained in this information sheet is not intended to be exhaustive or absolute.

Nothing contained in this publication should be interpreted as mandatory, obligatory or designed to conflict with any statutory regulations.

Useful Contacts and Links

Garda National Drugs Unit,
Dublin Castle, Dublin 2.
Tel: (01) 6669900, Fax: (01) 6669985
or your local Garda Station

An Garda Síochána
(website: www.garda.ie)

Crosscare Drug and Alcohol Programme
(website: www.drugs.ie)
Tel: (01) 8360911

Community Awareness of Drugs
(website: www.faboutdrugs.ie)
Tel: (01) 6792681

Health Service Executive
(website: www.hse.ie)
Freefone 1800 341 900,
7 days per week from 10am to 10pm

Health Research Board
(website: www.hrb.ie)
Tel: (090) 6479078