

Drugs: What to Know

It's not hard to find drugs, and sometimes it may seem like everyone's doing them — or wanting you to do them. But as with anything that seems too good to be true, there are downsides (and dangers) to taking drugs.

How Drugs Work

Drugs are chemicals or substances that change the way our bodies work. Some are medicines that help people when doctors prescribe them. Many have no medical use or benefits.

When taken (usually by swallowing, inhaling, or injecting), abused drugs find their way into the bloodstream. From there, they move to the brain and other parts of the body. In the brain, drugs may intensify or dull the senses, change how alert or sleepy people feel, and sometimes decrease physical pain.

Because of the way these drugs work on the brain, they affect the ability to make healthy choices and decisions. Even drinking makes people more likely to get involved in dangerous situations, like driving under the influence or having unprotected sex.

Although substances can feel good at first, they can do a lot of harm to the body and brain. Drinking alcohol, smoking or using tobacco, taking illegal drugs, even sniffing glue all damage the human body.

Commonly abused drugs include:

- alcohol
- amphetamines
- bath salts
- cocaine and crack
- cough and cold medicines (DXM)
- depressants
- GHB
- heroin
- inhalants
- ketamine
- LSD
- MDMA/Ecstasy
- marijuana
- methamphetamine ("meth")
- mushrooms
- PCP
- prescription pain relievers (opioids)
- Rohypnol
- salvia

Getting Help

If you think you — or a friend — may be addicted to drugs, talk to a parent, your doctor, school counselor, or nurse. They can help you get the help you need.

Several kinds of treatment are available for drug addiction. The two main types are **behavioral** (helping a person change behaviors) and **pharmacological** (treating a person by using medicine).

Experts in drug treatment teach people how to live without drugs — dealing with cravings, avoiding situations that could lead to drug use, and preventing and handling relapses.

It can be hard to overcome drug addiction without professional help and treatment. It takes time and isn't something that can be done alone — everyone needs support. Experts who help people with addictions are trained to help, not judge. To find a drug treatment center in your area, search online, check out the SAMHSA Treatment Locator, or ask a doctor or counselor for advice.

Drugs AMI

1. Name some ways drugs get into your bloodstream.
2. List four commonly abused drugs.
3. Name two kinds of treatment that are available for drug addiction that is discussed in this article.