WHAT ARE PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS?

Psychoactive drugs affect the chemical and physical functioning of the brain. These drugs are often termed “mind-altering” because they change the perceptions and the behavior of the individual using them. There are seven main classifications of psychoactive drugs: stimulants, club drugs, depressants, narcotics, cannabis, hallucinogens, and inhalants.

STIMULANTS

Stimulants are used primarily to relieve fatigue and increase alertness. The most widely used stimulants are nicotine, which is found in tobacco products, and caffeine, which is found in soft drinks, coffee, and tea. Cocaine and amphetamines are more potent stimulants. People who use stimulants build up a tolerance, which means they have to take larger and larger quantities in order to maintain the desired effects. Greater levels of use increase the likelihood of physical and psychological dependence.

CLUB DRUGS

Club Drugs include Ecstasy, GHB and Ketamine. These drugs have the effect of both stimulants and hallucinogens, and are popular at “raves” (all night dance parties). Ketamine use as an anesthetic in humans was discontinued due to the side effects but has limited use as a veterinary medicine. GHB initially gained popularity with body builders, but there is no evidence that it increased muscle mass. GHB is odorless and tasteless and along with Rohypnol, has the reputation as a date-rape drug, as high doses can cause deep sleep during which the user is essentially unconscious. Recent research by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has shown that Ecstasy damages the brain’s serotonin neurons. Ecstasy is a Schedule I category drug, which means there is no medical usefulness and a high potential for abuse. This is the same classification given to Heroin, LSD, and Cocaine.

DEPRESSANTS

Depressants are often referred to as sedative-hypnotic drugs or downers because they depress the functioning of the central nervous system. Small amounts help relax muscles and produce calmness, while larger doses create difficulties with judgement, reflexes and speech. Depressants are often used for medical purposes to relieve anxiety, tension and insomnia. Nonmedical use of depressants has the potential for psychological and physical dependence, which leads to abuse. Alcohol is the most widely used depressant followed by sedatives and tranquilizers.

NARCOTICS

Narcotics are drugs that dull the senses, induce sleep and become addictive with prolonged use. In medical use, the term narcotic refers to opium; narcotic analgesics are often referred to as opioids. The term analgesic refers to the pain-relieving effect of narcotics. Opium, morphine, heroin and codeine are the most commonly used narcotics. Opium is extracted from the seed pod of the poppy poppy; morphine and codeine are derived from the substance found in opium. Heroin is a synthetic drug made by modifying the chemicals in opium.

CANNABIS

Cannabis is a plant that grows mainly in tropical and subtropical climates and has been used as a drug for centuries. The main forms of cannabis are marijuana and hashish. Marijuana is produced by drying the tops and leaves of the cannabis plant. Hashish is a concentrated form of marijuana made from the resin secretions of the cannabis plant. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the most significant psychoactive chemical ingredient found in cannabis. The level of THC determines the potency of the drug.
Psychoactive Drugs Identification Chart

**Drugs**

**Medical Uses**

**Medical Names**

**Slang Names**

**Usual Administration**

**Effects Sought**

**Possible Effects**

**Oxidose**

**Long-term Effects**

**Stimulants**

- Nicotine
  - None
  - Nicotine: butt, chew, smoke, cig., cancer sticks
  - Physician prescription: tablets, liquid
  - Habit: sleep, snort
  - Dependence: lung cancer, heart attack, respiratory failure

- Caffeine
  - None
  - Caffeine: chocolate, tea, soft drinks, coffee
  - Acute: alertness, increased energy
  - Dependence: may aggravate organic diseases

- Amphetamines
  - None
  - Amphetamines: speed, bennies, dexted, pep pills, uppers
  - Acute: alertness, aggressiveness
  - Dependence: withdrawal, possible convulsions, toxic psychosis

- Cocaine
  - Local anesthetic
  - Cocaine: coke, rock, crack, blow, toot, white, blast, snow, flake
  - Acute: alertness, euphoria
  - Dependence: depression, paranoia, convulsions

- Methamphetamine
  - Severe obesity, ADD, narcolepsy
  - Methamphetamine: dextroin, speed, meth, crystal, ice, glass, crack
  - Acute: alertness, increased pulse pressure, exhibition, psychosis
  - Dependence: inhibition, mental confusion, weight loss, anxiety, rapid mood swings

**Club Drugs**

**Club Drugs**

- Ecstasy (3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine)
  - None
  - Ecstasy: X, MDMA, MDA, ADAM, XTC
  - Acute: alertness, euphoria
  - Dependence: toxicity, neurologic damage, liver damage

- DXM (Dextromethorphan)
  - None
  - DXM: liquid, cough, head, nervous, headaws
  - Acute: injection, lack of inhibitions
  - Dependence: withdrawal, possible convulsions, toxic psychosis

- Ketamine
  - Ketamine Hydrochloride
  - Ketamine: ketalar, ketalar, ketalef, Vistaril
  - Acute: hallucinations
  - Tolerance: toxicity

**Depressants**

**Depressants**

- Alcohol
  - None
  - Ethyl alcohol: booze, beer, wine, liquor, malt liquor
  - Acute: sedation, alteration
  - Dependence: toxicity, psychogenic, possible death

- Hypnotics
  - None
  - Anesthetic: roofies, roach, roper, roaches
  - Acute: intoxication
  - Depressant: physical dependency, withdrawal symptoms including seizures

- Sedatives
  - None
  - Anesthetic: N.O. desoxyn, speed, meth, crank, flake
  - Acute: sedative, hypnotic
  - Dependence: severe withdrawal, possible convulsions, toxic psychosis

- Tranquillizers
  - None
  - Anti-anxiety: valium, librium, librium
  - Acute: sedative, hypnotic
  - Dependence: severe withdrawal, possible convulsions, toxic psychosis

**Narcotics**

**Narcotics**

- Opium
  - None
  - Analgesic, Antidiarrheal: parapatric
  - Acute: analgesic
  - Dependence: constipation, loss of appetite, severe withdrawal

- Morphine
  - None
  - Analgesic, Antidiarrheal: morphine, pectral syrup
  - Acute: analgesic
  - Dependence: constipation, loss of appetite, severe withdrawal

- Heroin
  - None
  - Research: diamorphine
  - Acute: analgesic
  - Dependence: constipation, loss of appetite, severe withdrawal

- Codeine
  - None
  - Analgesic, Antidiarrheal: codeine, emetprp compound with codeine, robeutin a-c
  - Acute: analgesic
  - Dependence: constipation, loss of appetite, severe withdrawal

**Cannabis**

**Cannabis**

- THC Research: Cancer chemotherapy and utensal
  - THC: tetrahydrocannabinol
  - Acute: analgesic
  - Amotivational syndrome: respiratory difficulties, lung cancer, interference with physical and emotional development

- Hashish
  - None
  - Research: hashish, hash oil, shal oil
  - Acute: smoke, swallow
  - Amotivational syndrome: respiratory difficulties, lung cancer, interference with physical and emotional development

- Marijuana
  - None
  - Research: marijuana
  - Acute: smoke, swallow
  - Amotivational syndrome: respiratory difficulties, lung cancer, interference with physical and emotional development

**Hallucinogens**

**Hallucinogens**

- PCP
  - None
  - Phenollidine
  - Acute: distorted perceptions of distance and time
  - May intensify existing psychosis, flashbacks, panic reactions

- Lsd
  - Research
  - Acid, sugar, acid, dose, blotter, windowpane
  - Acute: distorted perceptions of distance and time
  - May intensify existing psychosis, flashbacks, panic reactions

- Ecstasy
  - None
  - Mescaline, psilocybin
  - Acute: distorted perceptions of distance and time
  - May intensify existing psychosis, flashbacks, panic reactions

**Inhalants**

**Inhalants**

- Aerosols and Solvents
  - None
  - None: glue, benzene, toluene, freon, whippits, nitrous oxide, blue razz
  - Acute: inhalation
  - Heart failure, unconsciousness, asphyxiation, possible death

For more information contact the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Resource Center, 1030 E. Lafayette St., Suite 100, Tallahassee, Florida 32301 Tel: (850) 878-2196 www.fadaa.org