

DRUGS

AND

SOLVENTS

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

**This booklet is for all
parents and adults in
Northern Ireland who
want straightforward
facts about drug use
among young people.**

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The Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland.
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What's the situation in Northern Ireland?

DRUG TAKING in Northern Ireland is different from that in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. In Northern Ireland the most commonly used illegal drugs are cannabis, Ecstasy, amphetamine sulphate (speed), magic mushrooms and LSD. Young people may also misuse solvents and amyl and butyl nitrites (poppers). More recently there have been some indications that cocaine is more widely available.

There is evidence to show that the proportion of young people who have been offered drugs has increased in recent years.

How many young people in Northern Ireland are taking illegal drugs?

Up to one third of young people have experimented with illegal drugs. However, the number of young people taking these drugs on a regular basis is much smaller.

What about alcohol and tobacco?

Alcohol and tobacco are still the most popular drugs for young people in Northern Ireland.



Why do young people try drugs?

The first time

Young people may experiment with drugs for some of the following reasons:

- just to try it;
- to look and feel grown-up;
- to take a risk;
- because friends use it;
- because it's offered by friends;
- after a few drinks;
- to show off.

Many parents will remember the reasons why they first tried a cigarette or a drink when they were a teenager. These reasons are as true today as they were then. However, they now apply to illegal drugs as well.

Why do some young people carry on taking drugs?

There are many reasons why some young people carry on taking drugs but some of the common ones are: enjoyment, escapism, inability to cope with everyday life, lack of success and negative feelings about themselves.

Only some young people in Northern Ireland take illegal drugs on a regular basis and a few of these will become dependent on them. However, there are problems, risks and dangers involved with **ALL** types of drug use, and therefore it is important to talk to your children about drugs and solvents.

What are the risks of taking illegal drugs?

Physical risks

These depend on the type and strength of the drug, the amount taken, where and how it's taken and the person taking it. There are a range of effects including a change in heart rate and blood pressure, exhaustion, collapse, and in a few cases, death. Physical dependence occurs when the body actually wants the drug. If the drug is not provided, withdrawal symptoms will occur, eg stomach cramps, sweating, sleeplessness or anxiety.

Psychological risks

Effects include a reduction in self-confidence, feelings of inability to cope, anxiety and panic. These feelings can be quite mild or extremely frightening and can continue for several days after use. In some cases lasting psychological damage takes place, especially if there are any underlying mental health problems. Psychological dependence occurs when a person has a strong need to keep taking the drug in order to cope with life.

Social risks

These include difficulties with family and friends and poor performance and difficulties at school, college or work. Drug taking can lead to involvement in anti-social activities, such as 'joy-riding'. Users may also make unwise decisions concerning, for example, their sexual behaviour.

Legal risks

These include being convicted of a drugs offence. Young people may also be convicted of being involved in petty crime to fund their drug taking. The resulting criminal record can affect a young person's life in many ways, including future job prospects and travel to certain countries.

Misuse of Drugs Act (1971)

The possession and supplying of a drug (including giving to friends), which is described as illegal by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971), is against the law and carries with it the definite risk of fines and/or imprisonment.

Nobody below the age of 10 in Northern Ireland can be convicted of a criminal offence. Above this age, it depends on the drugs the young person is taking or supplying. Under the Drugs Act 2005 increased sentences are available to the Courts if dealers are arrested selling drugs close to school premises.

Maximum sentences for offending against the Misuse of Drugs Act are severe.

Regular offenders, dealers and smugglers are targeted and may have all their property and goods taken off them and be imprisoned for many years. First offenders who have a drug for their own use may receive only a caution, but there may be more serious penalties.

In Northern Ireland, young people under 17 years of age are usually dealt with by a Juvenile Court. This court has powers to fine a parent or child, or to send the offender to a variety of institutions as an alternative to being sent to prison.

As a parent, what are my legal responsibilities?

Most parents are aware that their sons or daughters might be fined or imprisoned for possessing or supplying drugs. However, many don't realise that it is possible to break the law even without touching drugs.

If a parent knows that their son or daughter is sharing illegal drugs with a friend in their house, but does nothing to stop it, then that parent has committed an offence.

Further, in Northern Ireland, it is an offence to fail, without reasonable excuse, to report to the RUC the commission of some serious criminal offences, including certain drug offences.

What are the signs of drug taking?

IT IS very difficult to tell when a young person first tries drugs or only takes them occasionally. Many of the 'signs' are just like the normal signs of growing up, eg being moody or distant. It's important that you don't jump to the wrong conclusions but look for some of the indicators below.

Possible indicators:

- sudden and regular changes of mood;
- loss of appetite;
- gradual loss of interest in school, hobbies, sport, friends;
- increased evidence of lying or other secretive behaviour;
- money or other objects around the house 'going missing' (including the young person's formerly 'treasured possessions');
- unusually tired;
- unable to sleep at night;
- sudden appearance of new 'friends';
- bouts of talkative, excitable and overactive behaviour.

It's unlikely that you will find any actual drugs, but you may come across possible evidence of drug use. These include:

- cigarette papers;
- 'wraps' (square folds of paper which may have contained powder);
- cling film, foil and small plastic bags used to package small quantities of drugs;
- syringes.

What drugs are around and what do they look like?

There are four basic types of drugs:

Depressants These drugs slow down the brain and body systems. Examples are alcohol, cannabis, tranquillisers and solvents.

Hallucinogens These drugs can alter the way a person sees things, such as light and colour, and can cause hallucinations. Examples are LSD and magic mushrooms.

Stimulants These drugs speed up or stimulate the brain or body systems. Examples are amphetamine sulphate (speed), cocaine, caffeine and 'poppers'.

Opiates These drugs reduce pain. Examples are heroin and morphine.

Some illegal drugs are a mixture of types. For instance, Ecstasy combines hallucinogenic and stimulant effects.

Some slang names are included in this section, but these can be very localised and can change quickly. There is a danger that by using these terms with young people, parents can come across as completely out of touch or patronising.

Some prices are included as a very rough guide - like slang names these can vary from place to place and week to week.

Although the real risks of drug taking have been pointed out, it is possible to use drugs in a way that does not lead to immediate health problems or dependence, although these can't be ruled out. However, the only safe use of drugs is non-use.

Alcohol and tobacco are not included in the following section but they are still the most popular drugs for young people. They can cause serious health problems if taken on a regular basis over a long period of time and binge drinking is particularly risky for young people.

CANNABIS

Slang names: blow, dope, hash, wacky-backy, pot, joint, spliff, five-deal, smoke, skunk.

Description Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug in Northern Ireland. It is usually smoked in the form of resin, (hash), a brown solid mass which is crumbled and mixed with tobacco and made into a type of cigarette called a 'joint'. In Northern Ireland it is normally sold in £5-£6 'deals' (= 1 gram).



Effects Not everyone gets much effect from cannabis, and some novice users feel sick whilst others may feel anxious and guilty. Some people get mild hallucinations. The most common effects are relaxation, talkativeness and a heightened perception of music and colour.

Dangers One of the main dangers of cannabis is the state of intoxication it creates, eg like being drunk. The person may not be able to drive, cross the road or operate machinery safely. It may affect short-term memory and this could cause problems with school or college work. Heavy use of cannabis over a period of years may cause respiratory diseases like bronchitis and lung cancer. Regular use during pregnancy increases the risk of premature birth.

Dependence People can become psychologically dependent on cannabis for enjoyment, or coping with life. There is no evidence of physical dependency. Cannabis use has been associated with poor mental health and its use may increase the risk of developing mental illness in some users.

Other points There is nothing 'in' cannabis which causes people to try other drugs, yet people who smoke cannabis are more likely to experiment with other illegal drugs.

ECSTASY

Slang names: E.

Description Ecstasy is a drug mainly associated with the dance and all-night club scene.

Ecstasy is usually available as a white, brown, pink or yellow tablet, or occasionally coloured capsule, selling in Northern Ireland at around £3-£5 per tablet. Street names constantly change according to the

impressions/logos used on the tablets, eg D&G, shrek, smiley face, or mitsubishies.



Effects The effects begin after about 20 minutes and can last several hours. The drug can have a calming effect with heightened perceptions of colour and sound. This is accompanied by sweating, loss of appetite, rise in heart rate and blood pressure and a stiffness in arms, legs and jaws. It also has stimulant properties. Coordination may be affected making it dangerous to drive or operate machinery under the influence of Ecstasy.

At higher or repeated doses, all these effects may be experienced more acutely.

For several days after taking the drug effects such as muscle pain, fatigue and depression can occur. This feeling can last up to between 3 and 4 days and is known as a comedown.

Dangers Because the drug acts like a stimulant it is especially dangerous for people with heart conditions, high blood pressure or subject to epileptic fits or any kind of mental illness.

Frequent high doses have led to some users having feelings of anxiety, panic, confusion, and visual and auditory hallucinations.

There have been a number of deaths associated with Ecstasy in the United Kingdom. It would appear that the young people concerned may have been particularly susceptible to the stimulant effects of Ecstasy. There may also be a link between the susceptibility and attendance at dance venues where there is the risk of people becoming over-heated and dehydrated. It is possible that Ecstasy increases the effects of heat-stroke.

Deaths from Ecstasy use have also been attributed to people drinking too much water in attempting to counteract the dehydrating effect of the drug. Drinking too much water in one go is dangerous. Instead, sipping up to a pint of water over the course of an hour may reduce dehydration. Research continues into the effects of Ecstasy on the liver and the brain.

Dependence Some users may become psychologically dependent. There is no physical dependence.

Other points This information about Ecstasy is based on the assumption that what is sold as Ecstasy, is in fact Ecstasy. However, the Trades Description Act does not cover illegal drugs, and some Ecstasy tablets contain other substances - sometimes LSD and amphetamine sulphate, or household cleaners, dog worming ingredients and worse. Obviously in these cases the risks of physical and psychological harm increase. There is also increased risk to health from particularly strong Ecstasy.

AMPHETAMINE SULPHATE

Slang names: speed, whizz, uppers.

Description Amphetamine sulphate is a stimulant. It is mainly found as a white or off-white powder sold in capsules or 'wraps' and is usually swallowed. At the moment amphetamine sulphate costs about £10 a gram or £3/£4 per 'wrap' in Northern Ireland. However, it is often 'cut' (mixed) with other substances that look like the drug.



Effects One dose can last several hours. Amphetamine sulphate stimulates the nervous system, puts off tiredness for a time and makes the person feel alert and confident. Users find quickly they need to take more of the drug to get the same effect. Unpleasant effects may include excessive mood swings, panic and confusion. After use people usually feel extremely tired, hungry and down.

Dangers Regular heavy use can increase the severity of the bad effects and can lead to feelings of paranoia and hallucinations in extreme cases. After long-term use the user may feel tired, hungry, depressed or even suicidal in the period after stopping using the drug and will continue to feel unwell for some time.

As a powerful stimulant that increases heart and breathing rates, its use places strain on the heart, which is dangerous for people with a heart condition. Its use can lead to anxiety, depression, irritability, aggression and paranoid feelings.

Dependence Regular use of the drug, even small amounts, can lead to a marked psychological dependence due to the feelings of wellbeing induced by the drug. Although there is not strict physical dependence associated with amphetamine sulphate, users try to delay the onset of tiredness and general feelings of being down by taking more of the drug.

LSD

Slang names: acid, acid-tabs, tabs, trips.

Description LSD is manufactured illegally in 'factories' in the UK and Europe by impregnating minute quantities of the drug onto small squares of blotting paper. These are then chewed or dissolved in the mouth. The squares carry attractive designs, eg patterns, symbols, and pictures of cartoon characters or film stars. Often LSD is sold using the designs as 'trade' names. The designs change quite quickly and so a list of current names is soon out of date. The current average dose of about 50-75 micrograms costs about £3 in Northern Ireland.



Effects LSD is an extremely powerful hallucinogen. It produces very profound psychological effects which depend on the amount taken and the feelings of the person at the time. The experience, or 'trip' which can last for up to 12 hours can vary from visions of joy and beauty to walking nightmares. Perceptions of the world become distorted. It can take a while to fully recover from the experience. There are virtually no physical effects.

Dangers The main danger of any hallucinogenic drug is that the experience may be damaging to someone with mental illness, or worse, may trigger a psychotic response in somebody whose condition is undiagnosed. People from a family with a history of mental illness are at particular risk if they take this drug.

Less seriously, inexperienced users can feel confused and disorientated for some time after taking the drug and may need reassurance that they are not going crazy. The risk of a 'bad trip' is increased if the user is already feeling anxious or distressed. Users may also experience something called a 'flashback' - where the 'trip' is relived without actually taking the drug. This can happen many years later.

Dependence A small minority of those who have used LSD become psychologically dependent. There is no physical dependence.

MAGIC MUSHROOMS

Slang names: mussies, mushies.

Description Magic mushrooms are those which contain the hallucinogenic drugs psilocin or psilocybin. These drugs are powerful hallucinogens which produce effects similar to LSD. Although there are around 12 different varieties of magic mushrooms that grow wild in the UK, the one most commonly referred to as a magic mushroom is the Liberty Cap, which grows wild in many parts of Northern Ireland.



In the past, only dried and prepared magic mushrooms were illegal. The current law, which came into force on 18 July 2005, means that raw or fresh magic mushrooms, as well as those that are prepared (eg dried or stewed) are now classified as class A drugs.

Effects The effects depend on how many are taken. Small amounts can cause excitement and euphoria, larger amounts can lead to apparent distortions of shape and colour and hallucinations. There may also be feelings of nausea, dizziness, vomiting, diarrhoea and stomach pains.

Dangers These are the same as LSD. A specific danger with magic mushrooms is picking the wrong ones - some species are highly poisonous.

Dependence As with LSD, a small minority of users have become psychologically dependent.

SOLVENTS

Description The range of products of this type is extensive and widely available, it includes:

- aerosol sprays (like hair spray or pain relieving sprays);
- butane gas (used as cigarette fuel);
- solvent-based glues;
- dry-cleaning fluids;
- paint and paint thinners;
- correcting fluids;
- petrol.



Effects Solvent sniffing is not illegal. However, it is against the law to supply or offer to supply volatile substances to anyone under the age of 18, knowing or suspecting that the product will be misused. It is also an offence to supply gas lighter refills to anyone under the age of 18. The effects of using solvents are like that of alcohol. Solvents act as a depressant and cause intoxication and occasionally hallucinations.

Dangers It is especially dangerous to place a plastic bag completely over the head, spray aerosol or cigarette lighter fuels directly into the mouth, have lighted cigarettes around when misusing solvents or get intoxicated in dangerous places, for example near water or alone. Solvents can also cause sudden death. They can make the heart more sensitive to the effects of adrenaline causing it to beat irregularly and sometimes stop. This is more likely if misusers are excited or exert themselves. For this reason anyone found with solvents should never be chased. It can occur with first-timers as well as regular users. Long-term regular use may also cause problems with the kidneys, bone marrow and liver.

Dependence Misusing solvents carries a risk of psychological dependence. Although there would appear to be no physical dependence with solvents, long-term users sometimes display mild withdrawal symptoms.

AMYL AND BUTYL NITRITES

Slang names: poppers.

Description As with solvents, poppers are not illegal to buy or use in Northern Ireland. In recent years nitrites have been produced in the USA and imported into Northern Ireland as 'liquid incense'. They are sold in 2" (5 cm) brown bottles or sometimes in more sophisticated looking containers, and are usually inhaled. They cost about £3-£5 each.



Effects The effects are virtually instantaneous and last for about five minutes. Users claim a brief 'high' as the face flushes, the head and neck perspire and the heart rate increases. They can also cause nausea, weakness and headaches.

Dangers Larger doses and long-term use can result in decreased heart rate, impaired breathing, low blood pressure and fainting. As these substances act on the heart, they are particularly dangerous for those with known heart problems or anaemia.

Dependence There is a risk of psychological dependence but no reports of physical dependence.

HEROIN

Slang names: smack, H, brown, gear, skag.

Description In Northern Ireland heroin is most commonly sold as a brown powder, although other forms, including grey, pink, and white are available. Compared to other illicit drugs, Heroin is not widely used in Northern Ireland. Among those seeking treatment for heroin use, the average age for first use of the drug is 21. Heroin is sold in 'twists' or bags and costs about £20 a 'twist' ($\frac{1}{4}$ gram).



Effects Regular users say it produces a sense of warm and pleasant drowsiness. However, for the first-time user there can be immediate and unpleasant side effects such as nausea and vomiting.

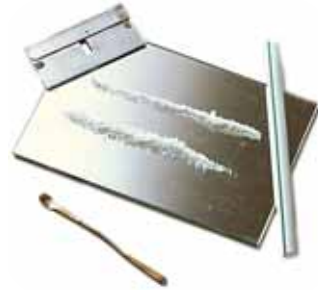
Dangers Regular prolonged use can cause poor health due to an inadequate diet, constipation and loss of periods for women. There are the obvious health risks involved with injecting drug use, eg HIV infection. Excessive doses can lead to coma and death from respiratory failure. Death may also occur because the user cannot always be sure of the mix and strength of the heroin. There have been deaths associated with heroin use in Northern Ireland.

Dependence There is a high risk of both physical and psychological dependence.

COCAINE AND CRACK

Slang names: cocaine, coke, charlie, white.

Description Cocaine (right), which is not widely available in Northern Ireland at the moment, is a stimulant drug. It is a white powder which is usually sniffed. Crack, (below) is a form of cocaine that can be smoked. It looks like a small crystal about the size of a raisin.



Cocaine is an expensive drug, costing about £40-£50 per gram (15-20 'lines') and the effect of a single dose lasts 20-30 minutes. With repeated use more of the drug is required to produce the same effect.

Crack is also expensive. Each small crystal can cost around £20 and lasts about 10-12 minutes.



Effects Like amphetamine sulphate, cocaine and crack stimulate the nervous system and make the person feel alert and confident. Unpleasant effects include exhaustion, nausea and being unable to relax or sleep.

Dangers The longer term consequences of taking either cocaine or crack include shortness of breath, chest pains, feelings of paranoia and damage to the nose.

Dependence There is a very high risk of psychological dependence with both drugs. There is no strict physical dependency.

Other drugs in brief

Prescription drugs

The most commonly prescribed tranquillisers in Northern Ireland belong to a group of drugs known as benzodiazepines - these include temazepam and diazepam. They may be initially prescribed for a few weeks to help cope with a crisis. However, it is easy to become physically and psychologically dependent upon them and people who try to stop may suffer very unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. These drugs are commonly found in many medicine cabinets and young people have been known to experiment with them.

Ketamine

Ketamine is a powerful anaesthetic drug, classified as illegal under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971). Anecdotal evidence suggests that a small number of people in Northern Ireland use ketamine recreationally.

Anabolic Steroids

These are misused by some athletes and bodybuilders in order to increase muscle size, and, because they are derived from the male hormone testosterone, they also stimulate aggression. Some athletes claim steroids help them to train harder and recover more quickly from injury.

There are many potential problems associated with these drugs:

- in young people, use of these drugs can restrict growth;
- in men, there may be temporary side effects on the reproductive system, such as reduced sex drive and lower sperm count;
- in women, 'masculine' side effects such as deeper voice and smaller breasts may not be reversible when drug use ceases;
- if injected, using shared equipment, there is the obvious risk of infection;
- although rare, steroids may cause death from liver cancer.

These drugs may circulate in some gymnasiums and health clubs. At present it is not illegal to possess them, but it is illegal to supply them to anyone under the age of 18.

What can I do as a parent?

PARENTS CAN play a vital role in preventing harm to young people caused by drugs or solvents. You have a special relationship with your child.

All young people are at risk of taking drugs - being tempted to try is easy and resisting the temptations can be difficult. As a parent/guardian you can influence your children whether they try drugs or not. As a parent/guardian you can also help them if you find they are taking drugs.

Research in Northern Ireland has shown that young people believe their parents have a role in drug education, and that they want to know what their parents think about drugs.

As a parent/guardian you can:

- Increase your knowledge about drugs and their effects. The information in this booklet is a good beginning but you might want to get more information. The organisations listed on pages 21-22 can provide specialist help. It is important to try and stay up-to-date, and further information on drugs is available online at www.drugsalcohol.info
- Talk to your child about drugs. It is important to present accurate information. You should make clear what your views are on taking drugs. Try to be consistent about how you present them.
- Keep up-to-date with your child's interests and friends - especially any new friends.
- Find out what your child's school/college/club is doing to tackle drug misuse. If there is a parent information meeting about drugs - go along.
- Stay alert to possible signs of drug taking. Some of the signs which may indicate that your child is involved with illicit drugs have been listed on page 6. As a parent you are in an excellent position to spot some of these signs.

If you suspect your child is taking drugs:

- before you say anything, try to make sure you are not jumping to conclusions;
- then talk to them and share your concerns.

It may be your concerns are unfounded, but if you find your child is taking drugs:

- it is important to stay calm;
- stop and think before you do anything.

What can you do to help your child?

It is important that you:

- have got your facts right;
- find out if their drug taking is a regular thing or a one-off 'experiment';
- keep talking and listening.

If it was a 'one-off,' you may need simply to talk to them. Be firm, consistent and caring. Disapprove of their actions - not them. Give them some reasons for not taking drugs.

For example:

- that drug taking is illegal and could lead to trouble with the police and affect their chances at school and work;
- that it could affect their health now and in the future.

If you feel it is more than a 'one-off' situation, and that you need help, there are a number of sources of help and support.

Where can I get help?

IF YOU are concerned that your son or daughter may be taking drugs get in touch with your GP. Your doctor will listen to your problem and deal with it in an appropriate manner. If further specialist help is needed your GP will make the necessary arrangements. In addition the Health and Social Services Boards also have specialist drugs services. These are available at the following numbers:

Belfast	028 9032 9808	Ballymena	028 2565 8462
Downpatrick	028 4461 3311	Armagh	028 3752 2381
Lisburn	028 9266 8607	Londonderry	028 7186 5239
Newtownards	028 9181 6666	Omagh	028 8283 5365

There are four Drugs and Alcohol Coordination Teams (DACTs) covering Northern Ireland, based on existing Health and Social Services Board areas. Each one has a Drugs and Alcohol Coordinator who may be able to give you more information about organisations and events in your local area. They can be contacted at the numbers below:

Eastern DACT: 028 9043 4248
Northern DACT: 028 2531 1111
Southern DACT: 028 4066 0926
Western DACT: 028 8225 3950

A list of organisations in Northern Ireland which offer support, counselling and other drug services may be accessed online at www.drugsalcohol.info You can use this list to search for help in your local area. Examples of services working with young drug users and their families include:

Contact Youth
139 Ravenhill Road
Belfast BT6 8DR
Tel: 028 9045 7848

Northern Ireland Community
Addiction Service (NICAS)
40 Elmwood Avenue
Belfast BT9 6AZ
Tel: 028 9066 4434

Dunlewey Substance Advice Centre
226 Stewartstown Road
Belfast BT17 0LB
Tel: 028 9061 1162



Northlands
Shepherds Way
Dungiven Road
Londonderry BT47 2AL
Tel: 028 7131 3232

The Breakthru Project
18 Killymeal Road
Dungannon
BT71 6LG
Tel: 028 8775 3228

Advice and information can also be obtained from the PSNI Drugs Squad:
Tel: 0845 600 8000.

For some parents it may be useful to discuss their concerns with teachers, youth-workers or probation officers.

There is an increasing number of locally based community organisations and programmes dealing with all the issues involved in drug misuse. They may well advertise their services locally, and your local Drugs and Alcohol Coordinator may also have details.

In addition, information on drugs and local drug services, advice and help can be obtained from the National Drugs Helpline which offers a free, 24-hour, confidential service. Tel: 0800 77 66 00.

For written information, ie leaflets/booklets, contact the Central Health Promotion Resource Service in your local Health and Social Services Board area at the appropriate address and telephone number below.

Eastern Health and Social Services Board area

Eastern Area Health Promotion
Communication, Resource & Information
Service (CRIS)
Champion House, 12-22 Linenhall Street
Belfast BT2 8BS
Tel: 028 9032 1313

Southern Health and Social Services Board area

Southern Area Health Promotion
Department
Healthcare Directorate Department,
Admin Building, St. Luke's Hospital,
Loughgall Road, Armagh, BT61 7NQ
Tel: 028 3741 242

Northern Health and Social Services Board area

Health Promotion Service
Homefirst Community Trust
Spruce House, Cushendall Road
Ballymena BT43 6HL
Tel: 028 2563 5575

Western Health and Social Services Board area

Health Promotion Department
Westcare Business Services
The Hub, Gransha Park
Londonderry BT47 6WJ
Tel: 028 7186 5221



What should I do in an emergency?

IF YOU find a young person drowsy or unconscious it's important that you know what to do. It could save their life.

You should:

1. Make sure they've got fresh air.
2. Turn them on their side and try not to leave them alone (this is important because if they are sick they may inhale their own vomit).
3. Dial 999 and ask for an ambulance.
4. If you find any powders, tablets or anything else that may suggest drug taking - give them to the ambulance personnel.



Balancing it all out

BEING A parent has never been easy - at the same time growing up isn't always easy either. There are many conflicting pressures on young people, eg to be an individual and yet to be 'one of the gang'. They have a need to be independent and make their own decisions.

As a parent it is important to understand these pressures, which can sometimes become reasons for young people experimenting with, and perhaps regularly using drugs.

The care, support and understanding of parents at this time is especially vital.

If you suspect or are concerned that your son or daughter is using illegal drugs do not delay in getting help or advice.

This booklet contains information and text formerly in the booklets *Drugs - what every parent should know* and *Drugs and solvents - you and your child*.



**If you have any worries or questions about drugs,
there is someone there to talk to you.**

**For information and advice,
call the National Drugs Helpline
free and in confidence on**

0800 77 66 00

Other booklets that may be helpful when talking to your child about drugs include:

What do you know about drugs?
suitable for young people aged 10 to 13 years old.



Your body, your life, your choice
suitable for young people aged 14 years and older.



Copies of these booklets are available free from:
The Central Health Promotion Resource Service for your local Health and Social Services Board (see page 22 for the addresses).

You have a responsibility to do something and you can make a difference.
So, talk to your child - before someone else does.



Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland
18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast BT2 8HS.
Tel: 028 9031 1611 (Voice/Minicom). Fax: 028 9031 1711.
www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk