



connect

wellbeing, ability, recovery

MIXING DRUGS

Polydrug use: Know the facts

Polydrug use

Polydrug use refers to the use of more than one drug. Users often have a primary drug of choice (for example alcohol, Cannabis, Painkillers or Cocaine) but will use one or more drugs to top up, come down or as a substitute. Combining drugs can increase or alter their effects, often in unpredictable ways. Despite the risks, Polydrug use is extremely common with many people forgetting that prescription drug use mixed with other legal or illicit drugs carry added risk. For example, Tranquillisers or Cannabis may be used together or in a come down period from stimulant or hallucinogenic drugs, or prescribed drugs used with alcohol discarding the warning on the prescribed pills etc.

Poly drug use often carries with it more risk than use of a single drug, due to an increase in side effects, and drug synergy. The effect of one drug on another is sometimes considerable and here the licit drugs and medicines – such as alcohol, nicotine and antidepressants – have to be considered in conjunction with the illicit or controlled psychoactive substances. The risk level will depend on the dosage level of both substances. Concerns exist about a number of pharmacological pairings: alcohol and cocaine increase cardiovascular toxicity; alcohol or depressant drugs, when taken with opioids (painkillers), lead to an increased risk of overdose; and opioids (painkillers) or cocaine taken with ecstasy or amphetamines also result in additional acute toxicity. Benzodiazepines are notorious for causing death when mixed with other CNS depressants such as opioids (painkillers), alcohol, or barbiturates.

How To Avoid Dangerous Drug Combinations

The only way to completely protect yourself is to avoid mixing drugs altogether. When that is not possible, make sure you know exactly what you are taking, why, and how those drugs could interact with one another.

Many medications can be taken together safely. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking anything. Make sure they are aware of the medications you are already on. They will be able to tell you the possible effects of combining specific prescription medications, painkillers or supplements. It is best not to rely on information found on the Internet as it can be unclear or wrong.

People using illegal drugs should also talk to their doctor or pharmacist before taking prescription medications. Illegal drugs can dangerously change the effects of certain medications.

DO

- Know what you are taking, why and what the possible side effects may be
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist before mixing drugs or medications of any kind (including illegal drugs, dietary supplements and natural health products)

DON'T

- Swap prescription medications with friends or family members
- Increase dosages of medications or pain killers to try to increase the effectiveness



Advice and Getting Help

Getting the correct help and support is crucial to the recovery and success of anyone with issues linked to drug and substance misuse. We would advise anyone who is experiencing problems with drugs to seek help and support immediately. Involving your GP is strongly advised as your GP has a wide variety of services available and can also check to see if you require medical assistance as well as therapeutic support. The community and voluntary sector provides excellent services in partnership with statutory care providers.

Below is a range of info and treatment services available:

- Talk to Frank - <https://www.talktofrank.com/>
- Addiction NI - <http://addictionni.com/>
- Drugs and Alcohol NI - <https://www.drugsandalcoholni.info/>
- Inspire Wellbeing - <https://www.inspirewellbeing.org/>





Discover more information on our website:

www.inspireconnect.info