

## THE DRUG FAMILY

**Hallucinogens:** These are drugs that dramatically affect perception, emotions and mental processes. They distort the senses and can cause hallucinations.

**Narcotic Analgesics:** Are highly addictive pain-killing drugs that may also produce a euphoric sense of wellbeing. Some are natural, others are synthetics produced in laboratories.

**Sedative-Hypnotics:** Are drugs that cause a slowing down or depression of the central nervous system. They produce a feeling of calm, drowsiness and well being.

**Tranquilizers:** They are the most prescribed of all drugs. As above, they produce a sense of calm and well-being at lower doses, but they are much milder.

**Stimulants:** Are drugs that excite or speed up the central nervous system. They increase alertness and endurance to keep users awake, to decrease appetite and to help produce feelings of well-being.

**Cannabis:** Cannabis, which includes marijuana, hashish, and hash oil, is the most widely used of all illegal drugs. It has depressant effects, yet like stimulants, it increases the heart rate.

## INVISIBLE DRUGS

Alcohol, nicotine and caffeine. Alcohol is a sedative and nicotine and caffeine are stimulants.

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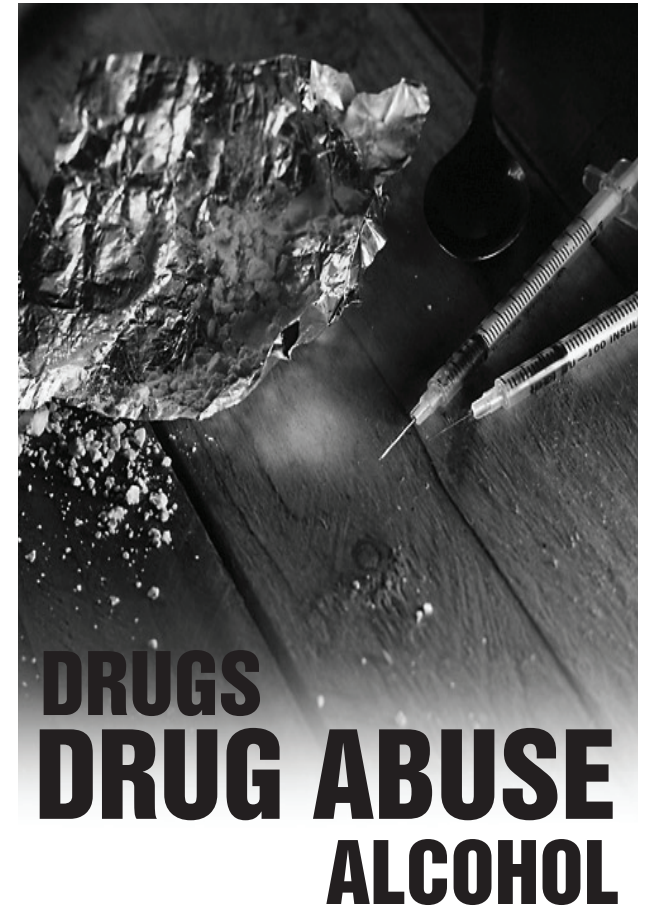
## FINAL WORDS

Continuing to use alcohol or drugs even though it's causing problems for you is a sign there is a problem.

Much is known about drugs and alcohol and their risks; much remains to be found out. Many of the long term effects may not be discovered for years.

Legislation and regulations concerning both licit and illicit drugs are included in the Narcotic Control Act and the Food and Drugs Act.

**If you are having a problem with drugs and/or alcohol, contact Alberta Health Services at 780-743-7187.**



rohypnol • STP • opium • codeine • morphine  
heroin • tobacco • alcohol • nicotine • demerol  
halcyon • amytal • solvents • cocaine • caffeine  
hashish • LSD • marijuana • dexedrine • valium  
methadone • librium • serax • nembutal  
tenuate • quaaludes • hash oil • seconal • dilaudid  
novahistex • lomotil • percodan • talwin  
inhalants • ativan • xanax



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## WHAT IS A DRUG?

Scientists define a drug as any substance, other than food, which is taken to change the way the body or the mind functions. They can be legal or illegal and they can be helpful or harmful.

**Mood Drugs:** Also called psychoactive drugs. They can change the way a person thinks, feels or acts. They work on the mind and senses. Psychoactive drugs are the most abused of all drugs.

**Invisible Psychoactive Drugs:** These substances are so commonly used that we don't think of them as drugs at all. Alcohol (a sedative), coffee (caffeine, a stimulant), and tobacco (nicotine, also a stimulant).

**Flunitrazepam (Rohypnol):** Is ingested orally usually with alcohol or other drugs. Commonly called the rape pill, roofies and the forget pill. The drug's effects begin within 30 minutes, peak within 2 hours and may last up to 8 hours or more. Side effects include decreased blood pressure, memory impairment, drowsiness, visual disturbances, dizziness and confusion. It may also induce excitability or aggressive behavior in some users.

## WHAT IS DRUG ABUSE?

Drug abuse is any use of a drug that causes a problem (apart from some undesirable but unavoidable side effects of certain prescribed drugs). A drug can be abused if too much is taken or if it's taken for too long a period of time. Also a combination of drugs taken together can produce unwanted and unexpected effects.

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## MOST ABUSED DRUGS

The drugs that are often most abused are psychoactive drugs.

Aside from caffeine, the most widely used and abused drug is alcohol. It is also the most costly and damaging form of drug abuse.

*Common reasons why people use drugs:*

**Curiosity** - Young people are especially tempted to experiment with drugs.

**Emotional Pressures** - To relieve various emotional problems, such as anger, stress, anxiety, boredom or depression.

**Social Pressures** - Young people may be influenced by their peers, by popular songs glorifying drugs or by famous singers, musicians or athletes who are known to use drugs.

**Group Pressures** - In some groups, taking drugs is the fashionable thing to do. It is the 'badge' of belonging and the key to social acceptance.

**Dependence** - Some people have become physically or psychologically dependent on drugs.

## WHO USES WHAT?

Boys more frequently use Cannabis and cocaine, as well as prescription barbiturates.

Older students are more likely to use drugs than younger students. Young children are more likely to sniff glue or use other inhalants compared to older teenagers.

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## RISKS OF DRUG ABUSE

**Safety Hazards:** All psychoactive drugs can reduce physical co-ordination, distort the senses or impair judgment.

**Physical Hazards:** All psychoactive drugs have effects other than those for which they are used and some of these can be very damaging to physical health.

**Mental Hazards:** Some drugs can cause short-term confusion, anxiety or even severe mental disturbance which can result in personality changes and loss of memory.

**Physical Dependence:** Without the drug, the user may experience a variety of symptoms ranging from mild discomfort to convulsions, some of which could be fatal.

**Psychological Dependence:** Exists when a drug is so central to a person's thoughts, emotions and activities that they cannot stop using it.

**Tolerance:** With regular use, a user needs more and more of a drug to get the same effect.

**Overdose:** May or may not be fatal. May occur in users who have developed a tolerance for a drug, or street drug users who have no way of knowing the exact potency of what they are taking. Some drugs are laced with other drugs or chemicals.

**Mixing Drugs:** This is related to a desire to enhance the effects of drug use.

**Legal:** The use of many psychoactive drugs is illegal. Some can be used legally, but only through prescription.

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