



AMBULANCE FACT SHEET

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Drugs and their effects



The following information is provided to assist you in understanding the effects of drug use and drug dependency and what to do if you find someone suffering from a drug overdose.

For all medical emergencies dial Triple Zero (000) immediately and ask for Ambulance

There are many different types of drugs that have a wide and varying effect on a person. Some examples are:

Depressants – are drugs that do not necessarily make a person feel depressed and affect concentration and coordination. They slow down a person’s ability to respond to unexpected situations and include (but not limited to) alcohol, cannabis, barbiturates, GHB, opiates (including heroin, morphine, codeine, methadone and pethidine), solvents and inhalants.

Stimulants – act on the central nervous system to speed up the messages to and from the brain and increase heart rate, body temperature and blood pressure. Stimulants include amphetamines, ICE, cocaine, ecstasy and certain slimming tablets.

Hallucinogens – affect perception. People who have taken them may believe they see or hear things that aren’t really there, or what they see may be distorted in some way.

Cannabis is a hallucinogen as well as a depressant. Ecstasy can also have hallucinogenic qualities.

- > For cases of drug overdose dial Triple Zero (000) immediately and ask for Ambulance.
- > The Ambulance calltaker will tell you what to do and will provide medical instructions until paramedics arrive.
- > Be aware of your environment, don’t endanger yourself (eg needles).
- > If the person is unconscious but breathing normally, roll them onto their side. If they are not breathing, commence CPR.
- > If you know what type and the amount of drugs the person has taken, inform the Ambulance call taker and attending paramedics.
- > Give any drug packaging found with the patient to the paramedics.
- > Police are only involved when paramedics feel endangered, someone dies, or there are other non-drug crimes involved (such as violence or theft).

HOW DO DRUGS AFFECT A PERSON?

The effects of drugs can vary from person to person (body type and mood), how much is taken and what other drugs are taken at the same time.

There are many situations you should consider before taking drugs. Some serious ones include drugs and pregnancy, drugs and driving, drugs and dehydration and drug dependence.

FIRST AID COURSES

The Ambulance Service of New South Wales encourages everyone to learn first aid. This can give you the confidence to assist when someone is injured or ill. To enrol in a first aid course contact an accredited provider listed with the Workcover Authority.

References:
Ambulance Service of NSW
Australian Drug Foundation

For further information please contact: