

## Drugs, the Brain, and Behavior: The Pharmacology of Drug Use Disorders

Where do calls go?

The seven different types of drugs are categorized based on their effects. Each type of drug has its own set of characteristics and dangers.

Pharmacologists group drugs into different categories depending on how they affect the body after use. Some drugs slow down bodily functions, while others speed them up.

### Stimulants

Stimulants increase activity in the central nervous system. The increased brain activity can make you feel like you're speeding up.

Stimulants can increase your heart rate, blood pressure, and levels of alertness. These drugs typically come in pill form. However, they can also be eaten, drank, or snorted.

Doctors usually prescribe stimulants for ADHD and narcolepsy. Stimulants can also help with weight loss as they can reduce appetite.

Some examples of stimulants include:

Adderall

Ritalin

Synthetic marijuana

Cocaine

Methamphetamine

Ecstasy

Caffeine

### Associated Risks

Students or athletes can abuse these substances to improve their performance. When abused, stimulants can lead to a variety of unwanted consequences.

These effects can include:

Anxiety

Paranoia

Psychosis

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High body temperature

Depression

Heart failure

Stroke

Seizures

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Opioids

Opioids are powerful painkillers that can give you a sense of euphoria. Doctors typically prescribe opioids to people experiencing severe pain.

These drugs can reduce pain perception and cause drowsiness. Other effects include confusion, nausea, and constipation.

Opioids can be injected or consumed as pills.

Here are a few examples of opioids:

Heroin

Morphine

Hydrocodone

Opium

Norco

OxyContin

Percocet

Codeine

Associated Risks

Opioid abuse can ruin a person's life. Because it's highly addictive, it can get a person addicted in just a few days. In rare cases, it's possible to become addicted after one dose.

When someone decides to stop opioid use, they can struggle with withdrawal. Withdrawal symptoms include:

Nausea

Vomiting

Diarrhea

Anxiety

Inability to sleep

Hot and cold flashes

Excessive sweating

Muscle cramps

Runny nose

Watery eyes

Sweating

Depressants

Depressants don't actually make you feel depressed. Like stimulants, they affect the central nervous system and slow down the messages between the brain and the body.

This "slowing down" effect can affect your cognitive and motor functions. It can even slow down your responses to whatever's happening around you.

The depressant's sedative effect makes people feel relaxed. Because of this, these drugs are prescribed for anxiety or insomnia.

Some examples of depressants include:

Barbiturates

Phenobarbital

Pentobarbital

Benzodiazepines

Xanax

Valium

Alcohol

Associated Risks

Depressants can be helpful when taken correctly. However, their sedative effects can be tempting for people experiencing stress.

Abusing depressants can cause issues both long and short-term, including:

Confusion

Dizziness

Extreme sleepiness

Slowed heart rate

Difficulty speaking

Inability to concentrate

Lack of coordination

Labored or shallow breathing

Death

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## Hallucinogens

Hallucinogens work by disrupting brain activity. As the name implies, the drug affects a person's sensory perceptions, causing hallucinations.

After taking hallucinogens, your senses can be warped or distorted.

Although research is being done on its medicinal uses, most aren't prescribed. Some examples of hallucinogens include:

Psilocybin (mushrooms)

Peyote (mescaline)

LSD (acid)

## Associated Risks

Hallucinogens can warp a person's perception of reality. Abusing hallucinogens can have tragic long-term effects, including:

Hallucinogen persisting perception disorder, also known as flashbacks

Fear

Distorted cognition

Paranoia

Psychosis

Anxiety

Increased blood pressure

Nausea

Dissociatives

Dissociative drugs work by interfering with the brain's receptors for glutamate. This chemical plays a significant role in cognition, emotionality, and pain perception.

Dissociatives can cause people to dissociate. It can make them feel like they're watching themselves outside their bodies.

These drugs can be taken as liquids, powders, gasses, or solids. Some examples of dissociative drugs include:

Ketamine

DXM (Dextromethorphan)

PCP (phencyclidine)

Associated Risks

Dissociatives can give users a false sense of invincibility. Their tendency to take dangerous risks makes them a danger to themselves and others.

Dissociatives can cause long-lasting damage. In addition, they can also cause the following immediate effects:

Depression

Anxiety

Suicidal thoughts

Speech difficulties

Social withdrawal

Hallucinations

Detachment from reality

Numbness

Memory loss

Get Personalized Care The best treatment is one that works for YOU. An addiction specialist can answer your questions and guide you through your options. Get the help YOU need today. Learn More Who answers?

Inhalants

Inhalants are volatile substances that produce chemical vapors.<sup>7</sup> These vapors can cause a feeling of euphoria or mind-altering effects.

As it sounds, inhalants are drugs that can only be inhaled as gasses or fumes. The "highs" are slightly different between inhalants.

Inhalants are mostly made up of everyday household items; here are a few examples:



Marker, paint, paint thinner, gasoline, and glue fumes

Nitrous oxide

Aerosol sprays

Room deodorizers

Associated Risks

â€‹â€‹Inhalant abuse can lead to devastating immediate and long-term effects, including:

Loss of smell

Brain damage

Nosebleeds

Weakness

Euphoria

Increased heart rate

Loss of consciousness

Hallucinations

Slurred speech

Cannabis

Cannabis or marijuana is a natural psychoactive drug derived from the cannabis plant. The drug acts as a hallucinogen with depressant-like effects.

Marijuana can be smoked, vaporized, or eaten. Here are a few sources of cannabis:

Marijuana leaves

Hashish

Hash oil

Cannabis-based medicines, such as Sativex

Associated Risks

Today cannabis has medicinal uses in the United States. However, it's often abused by people who don't need it.

Cannabis is a Schedule I drug, meaning it's highly addictive. Abusing this substance can lead to both short and long-term risks, including:

Lowered immunity to illness

Depression

Chronic anxiety

Reduced sperm count

Sedation

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Slowed reaction times

Enhanced senses, such as seeing brighter colors

Impaired sense of time

## Reference

[Memory Notebook of Nursing: Pharmacology & Diagnostics](#)

[Clinician's Guide to Common Drug Interactions in Primary Care](#)