

# the low side of the high life

There are a lot of drugs out there, and it's more than likely that sometime, someplace, you will be offered an illegal drug.

Wondering what is meant by illegal drugs?

Some of the most common are:

- Nicotine
- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Inhalants
- Cocaine
- Crack
- Speed
- Ecstasy
- Acid
- Heroin

Taking prescription drugs (such as methamphetamines or oxycontin) that are not prescribed for you, and taking prescribed drugs exceeding the amounts prescribed, are also examples of illegal drug use.

There's a reason these drugs are illegal:

- They do harm to your body.
- All are addictive.
- They affect your school performance and athletic ability.
- They get in the way of your ability to make smart decisions for yourself.

And, in the worst scenario, they can leave you dead. Is that a risk worth taking?

And don't believe all the talk about some drugs making you happy all the time or giving you an insight into the meaning of life — they don't. What they do give you is a quick pulse of pleasure and that can leave you feeling crappy for a long time.

Here are some FAQs on "what's out there" in the drug world (and more reasons why it makes sense to say no to drugs).

**Q:** My friend said that marijuana (pot, weed, hash, grass, mary jane) isn't as bad for you as cigarettes. Is that true?

**A:** Not at all true! Smoking one joint (marijuana cigarette) does the same damage to your body as five cigarettes. Smoking pot also makes you tired and hungry, lowers your ability to concentrate and remember things, and decreases your judgement, coordination, and motivation. Your school work is affected, and sports ability will decline.

Just like tobacco, smoking pot regularly can damage your lungs, mouth and throat. Long-term effects can be mental health problems, slowed reflexes, and hallucinations (weird visions).

**Q:** Is there any way to tell if I will have a good or bad trip before I drop acid?

**A:** NO! Acid (LSD), angel dust (PCP), and mushrooms are all hallucinogens (which means they can induce strange and disturbing visions, also known as the "trip"). Everyone reacts differently to them. The amount you take, your personality, your mood, and where you take the drug all play a role in the kind of trip you have. People under the influence of hallucinogens have been known to seriously hurt themselves and others.



Remember, hallucinogens can leave you feeling depressed, confused, scared (not unlike the most believable nightmare that you've ever had), anxious and out of control. What makes this even more of a nightmare is that once your trip has started, you can't stop until the drug has run its course.

**Q:** Are inhalants all right if you only do them once in a while?

**A:** No! Inhalants (substances that are sniffed to get a head rush) are dangerous because they shut off the oxygen going to the brain. Although they are not strictly drugs and not illegal to buy (certain glues, deodorants, paint, gasoline, and aerosols) they can do serious damage to your lungs, heart, brain, liver and kidneys.

Even one-time use can lead to overdose and death from lack of oxygen or "sudden sniffing death" (thought to be a result of heart failure).



The greatest danger to remember about inhalants is that it's very difficult to regulate how much you are taking in, so it's very easy to overdose and die!

**Q:** I wish I were bigger so I could do better in football. Some kid in the locker room told me steroids had helped him. It seems like a good idea to me.

**A:** Nope - BAD idea. Steroids are drugs that copy the effects of testosterone, the male sex hormone. Steroids can help you get buff and give you a more muscular body. But are you willing to pay the price? Side effects for guys include balding, enlarged breasts, acne, shrinking testicles (balls), difficulty or pain in urinating (peeing) and impotence (when the penis is unable to get stiff or hard if sexually aroused).

Girls may permanently develop a lower voice, a lot of hair on face and body, problems with their period, smaller breasts and acne. Since steroids cause your body to develop too soon and too fast, your growth may be permanently stunted. Some other side effects for both guys and girls are trembling, fluid retention, aching joints, jaundice (skin and whites of the eyes turn yellow) and liver damage. Also, if you inject steroids with shared needles, you can get hepatitis or HIV.



# think before you drink

It's just one drink. No big deal? Think again. The effects of drinking start with the first drink.

**Protect yourself**—Never ever drive if you've been drinking or using drugs, or get in a car with a driver who has been drinking or using drugs.

**Drinking alcohol gives you bad breath**, and can make you gain weight.

**It's deadly.** Alcohol is involved in almost half of all motor vehicle deaths, one of the most common causes of death among teens.

**Alcohol companies spend a lot of money on ads to make you want to drink.** Most people your age see 1,000 to 2,000 alcohol ads a year. Alcohol ads aren't supposed to help you make good decisions. Alcohol ads are meant to sell more alcohol.

When you drink, even a little bit, you are more likely to make **bad choices** and do things that you will later regret.

If you get caught drinking you could lose your driver's license, get fined or **go to jail**.

**It's illegal** for people under age 21 to drink alcohol.

Using alcohol can ruin your eligibility in activities and sports.

Drinking can cause hangovers, including headaches and vomiting.

**Alcoholism is a disease.** If someone in your family is an alcoholic, you have a higher chance of becoming an alcoholic.

