



## Safer Drug Use

**We do not advocate the use of illegal substances. However, if you do choose to use them, be responsible and be as safe as possible.**

While a lot of people may be familiar with a range of illegal psychoactive substances, either from personal experience or being around others that take them, many people will not have been exposed in the same ways that drug culture at university may present.

It is worth remembering that even if you are legally prescribed a medication, it becomes illegal as soon as you sell or give that medication to someone else.

Even if you do have experience with taking certain substances, there are always ways to be safer, or opportunities to expand your understanding of the substances.

Firstly, you do not have to allow people to pressure you into anything if you are not comfortable. If you aren't ready to experience a substance, then you're more likely to have a negative experience due

to being stressed and worrying. Most people will not try to force someone to take anything, but there is still no shame in sticking to what you're comfortable with. The same applies to alcohol; know your limits and stick to what you're comfortable with. Consume at your own pace. People will soon learn your boundaries and they should respect them.

Thanks to various student unions and groups, a number of universities now offer very affordable testing kits in order to ensure the substance you have, is actually what it was sold as.

**We're here. Isle Listen.**



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There are however limitations to these kits, as they may not flag up adulterants and are what are called “presumptive tests”. If your university doesn’t offer these, they can be bought online from retailers such as EZTestKits.com for as little as £3. (They also sell kits to test purity.)

**Start small!** If you are new to a substance or are unsure of the exact contents of something you’ve bought or been given, such as a pill for example, start with a very small amount. Even as little as a quarter of a pill. Then wait. Wait at least an hour, even if you don’t feel any effects, before taking more. The last thing you want to do is unknowingly double a dose.

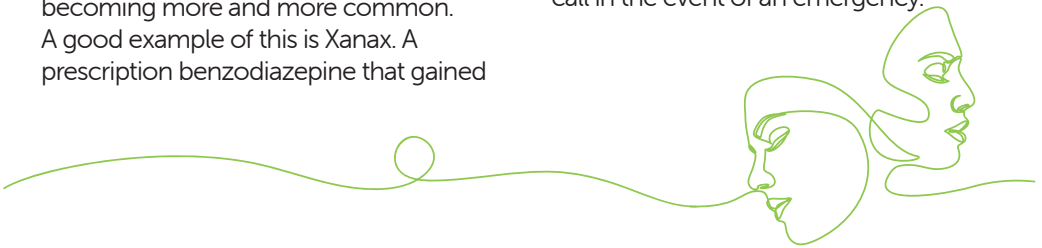
### Don’t take them if you think they’re going to make you feel happy or fix your problems

Just like alcohol and healthy relationships, they aren’t there to make you happy. They are there to make experiences more enjoyable. If you are using drugs to self-medicate, you are likely going to experience negative effects. The problems will still be there when you stop, and you will have also disrupted the natural chemistry of the brain.

**“Fake” Prescription Drugs** are becoming more and more common. A good example of this is Xanax. A prescription benzodiazepine that gained

popularity in the US, it quickly made its way to the UK black market. However, due to demand outweighing the supply rate, as well as to increase profit margins; people and organisations began pressing their own pills which often contained more than 10X the expected dose of active substance, as well as frequently being found to contain the extremely powerful, synthetic opioid: Fentanyl (80-100 X more potent than Morphine). The dangers involved with this are quite obvious if you are expecting a standardised, pharmaceutical grade, legitimate pill.

**Hallucinogens** such as LSD, Psilocybin Mushrooms and DMT are not party drugs. Some experienced users may use hallucinogens in “party” settings; however, this is not for the beginner and would generally not be recommended. If you are going to take a hallucinogenic for the first time (or at any time), make sure you are in a comfortable setting, with people you trust, and a responsible individual should be allocated as a “trip-sitter”. This is an individual who remains sober for the duration in order to step in should someone have a negative experience. They should be equipped with a basic understanding of how to help someone calm down and know who to call in the event of an emergency.



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Cannabis is by far the most widely used illegal drug in the UK and even if you don't use it, it's highly likely that you will encounter it during your time at university and beyond that. While many people say that cannabis is safe to use, it does come with its own set of potential risks. Regular, long term use can affect memory, concentration and mood amongst other things. Cannabis is also not what it used to be, plants are now bred specifically for their high ratio of THC (the main psychoactive substance in Cannabis) to CBD (a calming, potentially anxiety reducing compound found in smaller concentrations in Cannabis). This higher THC content can cause feelings of paranoia and worry in inexperienced users. If you have a family history of or predisposition towards a psychotic illness or mood disorder such as anxiety or depression, then it's best to avoid Cannabis as it can exacerbate any symptoms.

### **Don't be afraid to call an ambulance if you are worried.**

Paramedics and Doctors are not there to judge you or to treat you like a criminal. Their primary concern will always be for your safety and wellbeing. If you have the information, tell the ambulance crew what the person has taken as this will assist them with treatment.

### **If someone is having a bad experience:**

- Remain calm
- Try to calm and reassure them - don't scare them or chase after someone
- Try to find out what they've taken
- Stay with them

### **If they are anxious or panicky you should try to:**

- Sit them in a quiet and calm room
- Keep them away from crowded areas, bright lights and loud noises
- Encourage them to take slow deep breaths
- Stay with them

### **If they are very drowsy:**

- Sit them in a quiet place and keep them awake
- If they don't respond or become unconscious call an ambulance immediately and place them in the recovery position
- Don't scare them, shout at them or shock them
- Don't give them coffee or another substance to try and wake them up
- Don't put them in a cold bath to "wake them up" – There is a risk of drowning or hypothermia



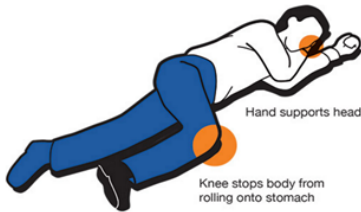
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If they are unconscious or having difficulty breathing:

- Immediately phone for an ambulance
- Place them into the recovery position (On their side, hand under head, chin tilted slightly upwards, away from chest and face angled slightly towards the floor)
- Stay with them until the ambulance arrives
- If you know what drug they've taken tell the ambulance crew immediately, it might them get the right treatment faster

### The Recovery Position

Keep the Airway Clear



Stay with person. If you must leave them alone at any point, or if they are unconscious, put them in this position to keep airway clear and prevent choking.

## Further Resources

There are many resources available online to educate you about specific substances, signpost to services and offer information about what to do if you're concerned about the habits of a friend or yourself.

Generally, if you want to access drug counselling or addiction services, your GP is a great place to start.

If you don't feel comfortable talking to your GP, you can speak to your University's Student Services or confidentially call your local drug and alcohol service for advice or support.

**TalkToFrank.com** – Offers good, unbiased information about an exceptionally wide range of substances, as well as advice about accessing support.

**Erowid.org** – Is a non-profit educational and harm-reduction resource. It contains information on doses and effects, as well as a vast library of user experiences and discussions.

**PillReports.net** – Offers reviews and lab analysis of a huge range of pills. While this isn't 100% reliable due to potential 'counterfeit' presses of popular pills, it's often very up to date and can therefore give you an idea of what certain pills may contain if you don't have access to test kits, or what pills to absolutely avoid.

**Motiv8.im** – A local Isle of Man based service that deals with addictions and offers confidential advice in a discrete manner.

