



Information for parents who want to talk with their child about **alcohol and drugs**





DRUGS

Sooner or later, your children will come into contact with alcohol, drugs or gambling. Before you start to talk to your children about those subjects, you need to know how such behaviour could affect them and what risks they will be running. Then you can give them the right information and help them form their own opinion. This leaflet contains information about alcohol, tobacco, gambling, hashish, marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine, speed (amphetamine), sleeping pills and tranquillisers. We also give you tips about what to expect when you start discussing these subjects with your children.

3 TYPES OF DRUGS

If we classify drugs by the effects they produce, then there are 3 types of drugs: drugs that suppress feelings or pain, drugs that pep you up and drugs that alter your sensory perceptions.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ADDICTED

You don't get addicted from one day to the next. It can take months or years. It starts with the occasional use of a substance. Some people stick to that level, but others get carried away and begin taking the substance more and more. That happens especially if you start using alcohol or drugs to get out of a bad mood: you're feeling fed up or stressed out, but a few drinks or joints make you feel better. Obviously that's not going to help for long, and the bad mood comes back the next day. So you keep trying it again and again, and you need the substance more and more often. When you can't get the substance and you start craving it, it could be a sign that you've grown psychologically dependent on it.

Not only that, but your body gets more and more accustomed to the alcohol or drugs. At some point, they don't help any more and you need increasing amounts to get the same effect as before. You start taking higher doses. Your body now expects to receive alcohol or drugs every day. If you stop or cut back, your body protests. You may even get sick. That is called withdrawal symptoms. That is physical addiction.

ALCOHOL

Other names:

booze drink spirits liquor schnapps



WHAT IS ALCOHOL?

- Alcohol is one of the drugs that suppresses feelings or pain.
- Most beers contain 5% or more alcohol, wines 12% and spirits 30% to 40%.
- Mixed drinks and alcopops contain 5% to 8% alcohol.
- Shots (spirits in small bottles or glasses) can contain up to 40%.
- Alcohol disperses throughout your body.
- Young people and women have lower amounts of bodily fluids. If you're a woman or you're not fully grown, the same drink will put more alcohol into your blood. That's why women normally get drunk faster than men.

EFFECTS

- After a couple of drinks, you feel cheerful and relaxed.
- You feel more self-confident and talkative.
- If you keep drinking, you soon have more trouble reacting to situations.
- If you keep on drinking even more, your cheerful mood may disappear.
- You have more trouble talking, walking and focusing your eyes.

RISKS

- Alcohol makes you fat. One beer contains over 100 calories, a small glass of wine has 80 and a mixed drink has 170 calories.
- You can get blackouts and forget what happened the night before.
- You can get hangovers and feel headachy and queasy all day.
- Alcohol can damage your brain. If you're under age 24, it can also disrupt your brain development.
- You can get alcohol poisoning and pass out from drinking large amounts. That risk is much higher for young people than for adults.
- You can become psychologically and physically dependent on alcohol.

TOBACCO

Other names:

cigarettes cigars shag snus rollies straights



WHAT IS TOBACCO?

- Tobacco is one of the drugs that pep you up.
- Tobacco is made from the dried leaves of the tobacco plant.
- The leaves are processed into cigarettes, shag or rolling tobacco, snus, pipe tobacco and cigars.

EFFECTS

- When tobacco burns, it releases nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide.
- The nicotine cheers you up, calms you down and relaxes you.
- It increases your heartbeat and constricts your blood vessels.
- When the nicotine in your body decreases, you get restless. You want another smoke.
- The tar in tobacco can cause the mucous membranes in your respiratory system to become inflamed.
- Carbon monoxide displaces the oxygen in your blood. Organs like your heart and muscles are deprived of oxygen.

RISKS

- Smoking damages your skin and your teeth. It gives you bad breath.
- Your physical condition deteriorates.
- Smoking damages your lungs. It makes you more susceptible to bronchitis and lung cancer.
- Bronchitis gives you a chronic cough. Tar can also cause abnormal cell growth: cancer.
- Smoking damages your blood vessels. It causes hardening of the arteries, which can eventually lead to heart attacks and strokes.
- Nicotine is addictive. Your body soon needs more and more nicotine to keep feeling the effects.
- As the nicotine level in your body declines, you get restless. You get the urge to light up another smoke.
- You don't notice you're addicted until you try to stop smoking or you're someplace where you're not allowed to smoke.

CANNABIS

Other names:

marijuana **hashish** **hash** **pot** **weed** **grass**



WHAT IS CANNABIS?

- Hashish and marijuana are drugs that suppress feelings or pain.
- They can also change the way you perceive things around you.
- The chemical that produces those effects is called THC.
- Some kinds of hashish and marijuana contain large amounts of THC. If you don't have much experience with them, the strong kinds can cause unpleasant effects such as panic.
- Marijuana consists of the dried flowering tops of the cannabis plant. Hashish is made from the resin.
- Hashish and marijuana can be smoked (in rolled joints or pipes) or eaten (in space cake and pot brownies).

EFFECTS

- Hashish and marijuana give you a cheerful, relaxed feeling.
- You experience music and colours more intensely.
- Cannabis intensifies your mood; if you're feeling lousy, it can make you feel even worse.

- Your heart beats faster and your eyes get slightly bloodshot.
- If you smoke cannabis, the effects begin a few minutes later and last 2 to 4 hours. If you eat it, they begin an hour later and last 4 to 8 hours.

RISKS

- You have trouble thinking logically and remembering things that have just happened.
- Cannabis can hit you the wrong way. You can lose control and feel sick and fearful.
- Smoking cannabis releases tar. Tar can damage your lungs.
- People who eat space cake often ingest too much. Because it takes an hour to feel the effects, they think it's not working and eat another piece.
- Smoking a lot of cannabis can disrupt your personal development.
- You can get psychologically hooked. You don't feel good any more without smoking a joint.
- If you frequently smoke a lot of cannabis, you can become physically dependent on it.

ECSTASY

Other names:

MDMA **tabs** **E** **X** **XTC**



WHAT IS ECSTASY?

- Ecstasy is one of the drugs that pep you up and it can also change your sensory perceptions.
- It is manufactured in laboratories.
- You take it in the form of a tablet or capsule, or as a powder dissolved in a drink.

EFFECTS

- Ecstasy has a dual effect.
- The stimulating effect makes you energetic, clear-headed and alert.
- The consciousness-altering effect makes you feel relaxed and carefree. XTC is also called an entactogen, this means that it can give you strong love-like feelings and a strong connection with others.
- If you take ecstasy frequently and in large doses the entactogen effect will disappear, what remains are the speedy effect and/or hallucinations
- Ecstasy makes your heart beat faster and it raises your blood pressure and body temperature.
- Some people get a stiff feeling in their jaws and a dry mouth and throat.
- It takes about one-half to one hour to feel the effects of a tab of ecstasy. They wear off in 4 to 6 hours.

RISKS

- Knowledge about ecstasy is not yet complete.
- Your body can get overheated, especially if you dance a long time in a hot environment.
- You can avoid getting overheated by drinking enough water (two glasses an hour).
- Ecstasy may damage certain nerve cells and lead to memory disturbances.
- It can make you grind your teeth.
- Ecstasy is manufactured illegally. You're never quite sure what chemicals they've put in your pills. You can get your ecstasy tablets and other drugs tested in Dutch cities. Go to www.drugs-test.nl and click on Waar kan ik drugs laten testen to find the drug-testing centres.
- After ecstasy wears off, you may feel worn out and exhausted. Driving and cycling could be dangerous.
- An ecstasy hangover can last several days. And it can make you feel a bit depressed a couple of days later, this is called the 'tuesday dip'.
- You can get psychologically addicted to ecstasy. Nightlife is no fun any more without ecstasy.

SPEED

Other names:

amphetamine uppers pep pills



WHAT IS SPEED?

- Speed is one of the drugs that pep you up.
- It is manufactured in laboratories.
- Speed can be sniffed. It can also be taken orally in tablet form or as a 'speed bomb', which is amphetamine powder wrapped in a cigarette paper and swallowed (see photo).

EFFECTS

- You feel full of energy. You feel like talking and doing something active, like dancing.
- You notice no hunger or fatigue.
- Your pupils dilate and your muscles tense up.
- Heartbeat and blood pressure increase.
- If you sniff speed, you feel the effects within a couple of minutes.
- If you take it orally, it takes 20 to 60 minutes.
- Effects wear off in 4 to 8 hours. The after effects can last up to 12 hours.

RISKS

- Speed can make you grind your teeth and seriously damage them.
- Your body can get overheated. That risk increases if you dance for long periods in hot, humid spaces. You can avoid overheating by drinking enough water (two glasses an hour).
- You can't sleep while you're on speed.
- The next day, you feel exhausted.
- Speed may damage certain nerves in your brain.
- If you take speed over long periods of time, you will become emaciated.
- Your blood pressure will continue rising.
- You may get depressed and paranoid.
- You can get psychologically addicted to speed.
- Your body develops a tolerance to speed. You then need higher doses to feel the effects.

COCAINE

Other names:

coke crack snow freebase line bindle



WHAT IS COCAINE?

- Cocaine is one of the drugs that pep you up.
- It is a white, crystalline powder.
- It's usually scraped into a line on a flat surface and sniffed up.
- Often it's adulterated with other chemicals.
- Powder cocaine can also be cooked up into freebase coke or crack cocaine.
- Crack is smoked in a pipe or cigarette. Many heroin users also take crack.

EFFECTS

- Cocaine makes you active, clear-headed, alert and cheerful.
- You become more talkative and highly self-confident.
- Your heart beats faster, your blood vessels contract and your blood pressure rises.
- After the effects wear off, you feel restless and empty.
- The next day you often feel down in the dumps.
- If you sniff cocaine, you feel the effects within a couple of minutes and they last about half an hour.

RISKS

- The mucous membranes in your nose get inflamed due to the constricted blood vessels.
- Your heart is put under strain. It beats faster but gets less oxygen due to the constricted blood vessels.
- Cocaine is addictive. Due to the fleeting effects, you quickly want more and more.
- If you're hooked on cocaine and you cut back, you may feel depressed and exhausted for months on end.
- If you take cocaine often, you can lose a lot of weight. You can also become fearful and suspicious of others.
- The effects of crack last no more than 5 minutes. The risks are greater than those of powder cocaine. It's easy to lose control.

TRANQUILLISERS & SLEEPING PILLS

Other names:

benzodiazepines benzos downers



WHAT ARE THEY?

- Tranquillisers and sleeping pills are drugs that suppress feelings or pain.
- They are taken to overcome sleep problems, anxieties and stress.
- They are available on doctor's prescription only.
- Almost all traquilizers are variations of a chemical called benzodiazepine.

EFFECTS

- They help you fall asleep or stay asleep.
- You feel less anxious and tense.
- They slow you down and relax you.
- They can make you drowsy and unresponsive.
- They relax your muscles.
- There are many types of tranquillisers and sleeping pills. Some have rapid, brief effects.
- Others have slower but longer-lasting effects.

RISKS

- Tranquillisers and sleeping pills can provide temporary relief. They don't take away the causes of the problems.
- You may also develop a tolerance, so you'll need higher doses to get the same effects.
- The effects of sleeping pills begin to weaken after 2 weeks, and the effects of tranquillisers after 8 weeks.
- Prescriptions are therefore limited to a maximum of 2 weeks for sleeping pills and 8 weeks for tranquillisers.
- The unpleasant side-effects include headache, fatigue, dizziness, muscle fatigue, nausea and diarrhoea.
- Memory functions are also negatively affected.
- These medicines can make you drowsy and weaken your muscles, increasing your risk of falling.
- Your reaction speeds slow down.
- It's dangerous to drive or cycle.
- After prolonged use, your emotions become dulled.
- You can no longer enjoy things.
- Tranquillisers and sleeping pills are addictive. You frequently feel urges to take more. When you stop taking them, you feel ill.

KHAT

Other names:

quat chat catha tschat miraa



WHAT IS KHAT?

- Khat or qat is one of the drugs that pep you up.
- A khat leaf looks like a bay leaf. Khat is usually sold in bunches of leafy twigs.
- It has been used as a recreational drug in Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya since the 13th century.
- The leaves are chewed and then held in the cheek until the stimulant substance is released. The active component is cathinone, an alkaloid whose concentrations are stronger in young fresh leaves. For that reason, the drug is used most in countries where khat shrubs grow. Dried leaves may be used to make tea.

EFFECTS

- The effects of khat are similar to those of amphetamine or speed. You may feel alert and invigorated. Users become more active, they forget about hunger and fatigue, and they become very talkative. Effects begin in about 60 minutes and may last several hours.
- One side-effect may be diarrhoea. After the stimulant effects of khat subside, the positive feelings may change into a depressed, negative mood. You may feel tired and listless the next day.

RISKS

- Khat may have addictive effects, but the risks of addiction are fairly low. Bodily risks include high blood pressure and exhaustion.
- Using khat is time-consuming and may perpetuate undesirable social situations.
- The use of khat causes increases in blood pressure, heartbeat and breathing rate. The elevated blood pressure persists for up to 3 hours after khat is chewed.
- Prolonged use may have harmful consequences such as heart attacks, bronchitis, gastrointestinal infections, cirrhosis of the liver and oral tumours. The severity and frequency of such physical effects are not yet known.



HEROIN

Other names:

smack junk opioids brown

WHAT IS HEROIN?

- Heroin is one of the drugs that suppress feelings or pain.
- It is manufactured from the poppy plant.
- Dutch heroin normally looks like a granular, greyish-brown powder.
- In the Netherlands, heroin is usually smoked ('chased') by sprinkling it on aluminium foil and heating it from below with a lighter. The resulting vapour is inhaled through a thin tube.
- Heroin is sometimes dissolved in acidified water and injected with a needle.

EFFECTS

- After taking heroin, you feel warm and contented.
- Heroin suppresses pain, sadness, fear, hunger and cold.
- Your heartbeat and your breathing slow down.
- If you take heroin often, you will feel sick if you try to cut back or stop.
- At that point, you are no longer using heroin to feel good, but just to keep from getting sick.

RISKS

- It's difficult to get the dose right. You can easily take too much and be killed by an overdose.
- If you use contaminated needles to inject drugs, you can get liver diseases and AIDS.
- Heroin is highly addictive.
- You may feel intense cravings for the effects of heroin. You might then be prepared to do anything to get some heroin.
- You soon need larger and larger doses to keep feeling the effects.
- Even after taking heroin for only 2 or 3 weeks, you will get sick if you cut down or stop.
- That makes it very difficult to cut down or stop taking heroin.



GAMBLING

Other names:

slot machines fruit machines blackjack roulette

WHAT IS GAMBLING?

- In gambling, profit and loss depend on chance.
- You gamble for money.
- If you play gaming machines, you find out immediately whether you've won or lost.
- If you play the lottery, you don't find out till much later.
- The riskiest games are those where you see straightaway whether you've won or lost.
- Slot machines are therefore riskier than lotteries.
- Slot machines are programmed in certain ways.
- Under Dutch law, you're allowed to lose an average of €40 per hour.
- If you play the machines for just one hour a week, that will cost you 52 times €40 = €2080 a year.
- Dutch law also requires each spin of a slot machine to last a minimum of 4 seconds.
- playing online poker is one of the most popular ways of gambling for young people.

EFFECTS

- It gives you a thrilling sensation.
- You feel exhilarated.
- You forget everything around you.
- You feel in symbiosis with the machine.

RISKS

- Very short games are gripping and addictive.
- The risk is that you'll keep playing longer and more frequently.
- When you lose money, you want to win it back.
- If you win, you gamble away your profits.
- You need more and more money to play, and that gets you into financial problems.
- You tell lies and make up excuses to obtain more money.
- You get into problems with friends, schoolmates or co-workers.
- You've become addicted. You think about gambling all day. You get restless if you try to stop or slow down.

TALKING WITH YOUR KIDS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

1. Adolescent kids (aged 12 to 17) are discovering themselves and the world. They're exploring to discover new experiences and they want to try out all sorts of things. They run up against many decisions: What groups do I want to be part of? How should I dress? What music do I like? As adolescents grow older, their friends and classmates have increasing influence, and the role of parents diminishes. That is normal and healthy. Learning to make your own decisions is part of growing up.
2. Adolescents are sure to run into alcohol and drugs. At the very least, they'll know somebody that's trying them. Alcohol and drugs are yet another subject they must form their own opinion about. So don't wait too late to start talking to your kids about substance use.

BEFORE YOU START TALKING, YOU SHOULD KNOW A FEW THINGS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUGS IN THE NETHERLANDS:

1. Soft drugs (marijuana and hashish) may be sold in cannabis 'coffeeshops'. Adolescents under 18 are not allowed to enter coffeeshops or buy soft drugs. They are also not permitted to buy tobacco, beer, wine or other alcoholic beverages anywhere that sells them. Gambling is also prohibited to people under age 18.
2. Drinking alcohol and taking drugs is not the same as being addicted. Many kids try these things out on occasion and then forget about them. Did you know that half of the adolescents that try cannabis once never smoke it again? The other half may continue to use it occasionally, like once a week or fortnight. Only 4% of Dutch adolescents get carried away and run the risk of becoming dependent on cannabis. In other words, don't assume your kids are addicted if they drink or smoke dope occasionally.

TIPS:

GENERAL TIPS:

1. Take an interest in your kids. Become aware of the things they're interested in and involved in. Be alert to any problems they might have. Know who they're hanging out with. Make sure your kids have good opportunities to enjoy their leisure time. Don't criticise them all the time. That can undermine their self-confidence.
2. Set good examples for your kids. Try not to smoke cigarettes, and be careful with tranquillisers and sleeping pills. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.
3. Know what you're talking about. There's a good chance your kids know more about alcohol and drugs than you do. If you find it hard to talk to your kids, try to involve a family member or other trusted person.

IF YOUR CHILD HAS NOT YET STARTED:

1. Try to find the right time to talk about recreational substances. That could be prompted by some television programme or experience your child has had.
2. Set rules and limits for your kids. Clear-cut rules help children learn to stand up for themselves. The best option would be for kids to never try alcohol, tobacco or drugs at all, or to start as late as possible. One of your rules could be that they're not to do any of these things before they turn 16. If you set a rule like that early enough (around age 11 or 12), then there's a good chance they will wait. Be sure to explain why you don't want them to smoke and drink.

IF YOUR CHILD HAS ALREADY STARTED:

1. Don't jump on them immediately. That will put an end to any conversation. Keep the conversation going and ask them to tell more about their experience.
2. Listen to your kids. Don't express an opinion until later in the conversation. That will ensure an open-minded conversation on equal terms.
3. Try to come to agreements. If your child is not willing to stop, try to agree about where and when they may, and may not, drink or smoke tobacco or pot. Keep them to their word. Compliment them when they stick to the agreement.

FOR INFORMATION AND ADVICE ON ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Jellinek Advice Helpline in
Amsterdam:

 020 - 590 15 15

(Monday to Friday, 3 to 5 p.m.)

Are you worried about your
child's behaviour? Phone
Jellinek Youthnet on:

 020 - 590 13 50

(Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

For more information go to:

 www.jellinek.nl

You can also get help from a mental health service in your vicinity.



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