



RU-OK? BRIEFING FEBRUARY 2024

NEWSFLASH

News items from around the web - health warnings and hot topics



Neurodiversity and substance use

“Substance use-related problems have been observed in 19-30% of diagnosed autistic individuals in clinical settings.”

Reported by Kathy Carter MBACP for BACP.co.uk in November 2024

[www](http://www.bacp.co.uk)  [Click here for article at bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)



How to talk to your teenager about drugs

A helpful article about how to approach the topics of drugs with your teens.

Reported by Nicole Lee (Professor at the National Drug Research Institute Curtin University) for The Conversation.com on January Monday 22nd 2024

[www](http://www.theconversation.com)  [Click here to visit theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)





Nitazenes

“Nitazenes are being mixed into heroin but it is also in fake diazepam, fake codeine”. Deadly nitazenes found in a number of different drugs. Reported by Robert Booth for The Guardian on Wednesday 17th January 2024

[www](https://www.theguardian.com) [Click here for article at theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)



County Lines

“A man who was groomed by a county lines drugs gang at the age of 13 said being classed as a modern slavery victim saved him from a life in jail. Reported by Davinia Ramos for BBC News on Tuesday 16th January 2024

[www](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news) [Click here for article at bbc.co.uk/news](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news)

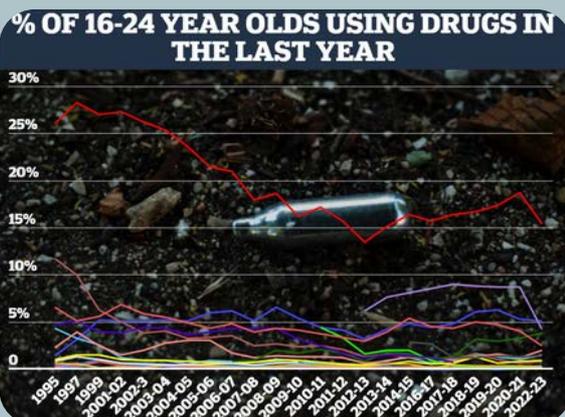


Drug predictions for 2024

Ian Hamilton, Associate Professor in addiction at University of York, talks about the drugs he thinks will trend this year.

Reported by Ian Hamilton for Mail Online on Sunday 21st January 2024

[www](https://www.dailymail.co.uk) [Click here for article at dailymail.co.uk](https://www.dailymail.co.uk)



HIGHLIGHT

The above mentioned article by Ian Hamilton for Mail Online features an interactive graph from national statistics showing the % of 16-24 year old using drugs - by different drug types.

CURRENT TRENDS

LEAN + XANAX

a risky combo



Lean is a drink typically made from codeine or morphine cough linctus (an opioid), and promethazine mixed with fizzy soft drinks. It is also sometimes known as purple drank or dirty sprite. It can be purchased online ready-made up, meaning those drinking it do not know exactly what the ingredients are. It is a central nervous system depressant from the same family as heroin (opiates/opioids) and therefore physically addictive. There is also a risk of overdose.

Alprazolam (aka Xanax, Ksalol) is a high strength benzodiazepine. Non-medical use of this depressant drug can cause memory loss, anxiety, over-sedation, collapsing and overdose. Longer-term use can lead to physical dependence and severe withdrawal upon reducing or stopping use.

Mixing these two depressants creates a major slowing down of the central nervous system. This means the heart, brain, blood flow and breathing are all reduced. The person can become very drowsy, sedated, struggle to breathe and potentially stop breathing altogether. The chances of overdose are far greater when these drugs are mixed. They should also both be avoided if using alcohol too.



[www](#)

[Click here for information about Lean from the Talk To Frank website](#)

[www](#)

[Click here to read an article about Lean: "Harlem rapper A\\$AP Yams died following what doctors described as an acute mixed-drug intoxication involving benzodiazepines"](#)

DRUG OF THE MONTH

NITROUS OXIDE

AKA LOONS, BALLOONS, NOS, LAUGHING GAS



Nitrous oxide is a gas used medically as an anaesthetic, when mixed with oxygen (aka gas and air). It's also used in catering as the propellant in whipped cream chargers. Some people use it as a recreational drug, usually inhaled from a balloon to get high.

When sold for recreational purposes, nitrous oxide or 'laughing gas' tended to come in small metal 8g canisters ('whippits'). The gas is then decanted into a balloon from which it is inhaled. In recent years much larger canisters (580g+) have been on the market. These larger canisters do not have any known legitimate use. We know people who have use around 100 balloons per sitting and have had health consequences because of it.

Nitrous oxide acts as a depressant (not unlike alcohol), in that it slows down the body's system and leads to feelings of relaxation or happiness – hence the name, 'laughing gas'.

Having a lot in one sitting can reduce the oxygen in the brain and cause either long term damage or death. Inhaling it through a mask also reduces oxygen levels in the body and runs the risk of passing out, suffocation or asphyxiation.



Inhaling NOS from a balloon presents a risk of sudden death from cardiac arrhythmia. Sudden Sniffing Deaths attributed to inhaling nitrous oxide from a balloon are very rare. However, underlying heart conditions could increase the chance of Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome.

Nitrous oxide inactivates B12 reserves in the body. Some people report tingling in the limbs, and loss of balance. Prolonged use can cause anaemia and a form of nerve damage called peripheral neuropathy. Recent reports indicate that heavy use can lead to serious nerve damage which can lead to paralysis.

There have been 56 deaths in England and Wales specifically associated with nitrous oxide between 2001-2020 (ONS).

As of 8th November 2023 nitrous oxide is controlled as a Class C substance under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 if it is, or is likely to be, wrongfully inhaled. Those found in unlawful possession will face either an unlimited fine, a visible community punishment or a caution – which would appear on their criminal record. Repeat serious offenders may face a prison sentence of up to two years, an unlimited fine, or both. The penalty for supply or production is up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both.

Harm Reduction advice:

- There is no safe way to take any drug but if someone is doing it anyway, this advice could minimise harm.**
- If you are inhaling balloons, it is important to do it sitting down as this prevents accidents such as falling over.**
- If you plan to use more than one balloon, let your body recover for an hour. Never have more than 5 in one sitting.**



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- **Stay with a group of friends and agree that one of you will stay sober in order to keep an eye out for the others.**
- **Keep to one drug – avoid mixing different drugs or drink alcohol. The results can be anything from unpredictable to actively dangerous.**
- **Plan your evening, stay in a safe environment – and know how you're getting home.**
- **There have been fatal accidents linked with nitrous oxide misuse. Don't get in a car with anyone who is using nitrous oxide. Choose your location wisely (avoid areas of water or cliffs).**

This advice is adapted from Re-Solv, who are experts in reducing the harms caused by volatile substance abuse ('VSA' or 'solvent abuse').

[!\[\]\(d3fb9f94af8b26d1c844efa9a98805b0_img.jpg\) Click here to visit the Re-Solv website](#)





RU-OK?

If you have any concerns about a young person's drug or alcohol use, contact ru-ok? or DASH - we provide confidential support, advice and guidance to young people, their families, carers, friends and professionals, alongside treatment programmes for young people identifying problems arising from substance use and/or sexual health.

A duty worker is available weekdays from 3 pm – 5 pm (4:30 on Fridays).

ru-ok? is available on Twitter and Facebook. However, our current focus is Instagram where we share useful information around drugs, alcohol and sexual health.

Please follow us at:



RUOKBRIGHTON



BHRUOKSERVICE



@RU_OK_SERVICE

You can also contact us at:



Tel: 01273 293966 or 07795 336436



Email: RUOKDB@brighton-hove.gov.uk

We would love your feedback!

